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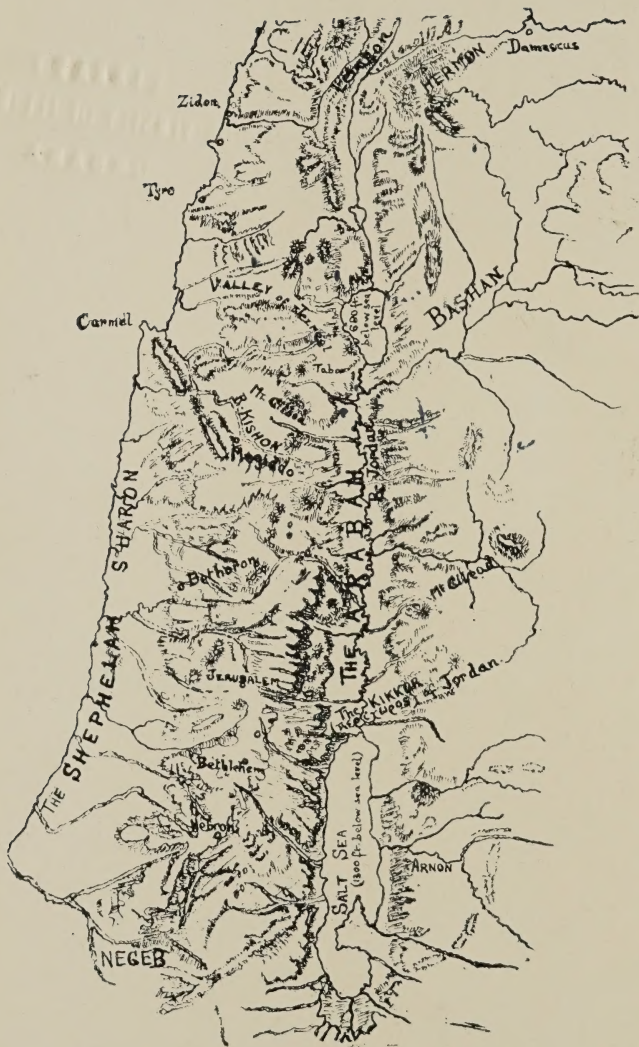
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SKETCH MAP OF PALESTINE, SHEWING PHYSICAL FEATURES.

A BRIEF BIBLICAL HISTORY

OLD TESTAMENT

BY REVEREND PROFESSOR

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PREFACE.

The need for a compendious account of the history of the Hebrews under the old dispensation is as imperative as it is difficult to satisfy; and this work is designed as an attempt in this direction. I have employed as its basis the third edition of my Biblical History of the Hebrews, which with the aid of Mr. S. STEWART STITT I have endeavoured to adapt for the purpose. With this end in view, we have eliminated those portions which appear to be unsuitable for beginners, and the rest is practically rewritten with the object of presenting as continuous a narrative as possible. In order further to assist the student in revising his work, a Summary has been added to each chapter; and to secure attention to the actual words of Scripture, these have been printed in italics. Thus the general design of the work is to form an introduction to the study of the history of the Hebrews, with the object of inducing

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the young student to betake himself to the narrative of Scripture.

I must express my gratitude to Mr. ROBERT WALLIS for the care he has taken in reading the proofs and verifying the references.

JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
March, 1912.

INTRODUCTION.

Religious education is one of the many problems of our day, and nowhere is the difficulty more acute than in the case of the Old Testament. Under no circumstances is it an easy task to arrange the different component parts of a volume so varied in such a manner as to give a young student a clear idea of its meaning and purpose. Isolated stories may arouse interest, but their connexion with the rest is not very obvious. Here and there a psalm or prophecy may touch the heart; but it stands as a thing apart, without anything to account for its origin. Not unfrequently, moreover, in the course of instruction in a particular book we meet with narratives apparently unedifying, or sentiments which are certainly not in accord with the highest views to-day.

There is the further difficulty of answering questions like "Is such an account true?" "Is this or that statement in accordance with what we are taught in a lesson on science or geography?" "Do people really believe this?" For youth is a season of credulous scepticism. A child will accept much on authority, and at the same time is ready with questions going to the very root of a matter. He also possesses an instinctive power of detecting that the teacher is himself doubtful as to the facts on which he is insisting.

It is therefore a hazardous and even fatal experiment to attempt to teach the Old Testament in a hard literal

manner, and deliberately to ignore its many difficulties. Equally so is it to claim for all its narratives an authority and accuracy in every point which cannot be proved. Far better is it to take the learner from the first, as it were, into our confidence, and to admit at once that there are difficulties, formidable indeed, but not insurmountable.

These may be ranged under the heads of (a) *Moral*, (b) *Critical*, whilst the third raises (c) the question of the *Miraculous*.

(a) In dealing with *moral* questions, there are, as everybody must acknowledge, certain episodes recorded in the Bible to which it is scarcely desirable to draw attention. But there are besides many acts and words attributed to the "saints" of the Old Testament which must be justly reprobated. In such cases it seems desirable, not only to remind the pupil that we live under a very different dispensation, but also to endeavour to set before him the conditions of life in primitive times in the East. Let the teacher picture a Jacob as a man of peaceful habits, living among men who had no scruple in taking his life if provoked, and his "craft", though not excusable, is perfectly natural and comprehensible as his only weapon of defence. Let him, when condemning the serious failings of a David, not fail to point out that part of his life was spent among desperate outlaws, and how great and just a man he was considering the circumstances of his eventful career.

(b) *Criticism* has seriously questioned not only the date, but the historical character of many records, and it cannot be wholly ignored by teachers. To trouble young students with details is undesirable, but it may be well to

give them some idea of the questions at issue. Now and then a double narrative, like that of Creation or the Flood, may be brought to their notice, as well as such elementary facts as the late date of the Mosaic Law in its present form as a code. It may also safely be indicated that certain episodes are related for purposes of edification, rather than in the spirit of what is now termed "scientific history".

(c) So-called "miraculous" events require much judgment in their presentation ; and it appears necessary to explain to our students that, whilst the belief in some was due to ignorance of what to us is perfectly natural, the truth that in the Old Testament we have presented the working of God's purposes in human affairs must never be allowed to be forgotten.

The importance of making the Old Testament interesting to the student cannot be disregarded. With our system of encouraging religious knowledge by examination, the Bible is liable to be regarded as a book to be crammed up, and a lesson often becomes the presentation of facts to be committed to memory. It is most desirable that the Old Testament should be shewn to be a book which can stimulate interest and appeal to the imagination of the young student. The geographical situation of Palestine, and the part the country has played in history, the features of the land, more diversified, perhaps, than in any territory of similar size, are, if properly presented, sure to make Hebrew history of more living interest to the intelligent boy or girl.

Archaeology has also its part to play. The great struggle of the saints of Israel was, to take but one example, against idolatry. But this cannot appeal to the

imagination of a child born in a land like our own. Let the excavations of Gezer or Taanach reveal of what kind the religion of the Canaanites actually was—its grossness and its cruelty—and it is easy to understand what animated the “saints” of old and provoked their indignation.

Above all things it is necessary to insist upon the value of the Old Testament as a religious book. To do this it is necessary to shew what the teaching and example of judge and priest, king and prophet, was to their contemporaries, and what it may mean to us. Under completely different conditions of life and enlightenment, we may surely learn ourselves from the Old Testament, and impart to others, the great truth so necessary to impress upon the rising generation, that above all things it is “righteousness which exalteth a nation”.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	vii
CHAPTER I.	
Primitive History	1
CHAPTER II.	
Abraham	7
CHAPTER III.	
Isaac and Jacob	15
CHAPTER IV.	
Israel in Egypt	22
CHAPTER V.	
The Flight of Israel, and the Wanderings, up to Sinai ...	32
CHAPTER VI.	
The Covenant; the Tabernacle; Israel's Apostasy ...	37
CHAPTER VII.	
From Sinai to the Death of Moses	44

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
The Conquest of Canaan 	53

CHAPTER IX.

The Period of the Judges 	61
--	----

CHAPTER X.

Prophet, Priest, and King 	73
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

The Reign of Saul 	82
---	----

CHAPTER XII.

The Reign of David : his Prosperity 	95
---	----

CHAPTER XIII.

The Reign of David : his Adversity... 	105
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

The Reign of Solomon 	114
--	-----

CHAPTER XV.

The Disruption of the Kingdom, and the Baal Worship...	121
--	-----

[The Reigns of Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, kings of
Judah ; and of Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah,
Zimri, Omri, kings of Israel.]

CHAPTER XVI.

The Strife between the Worshippers of Baal and of Jehovah. [Elijah] 	129
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

Ahab and his Syrian Wars	PAGE 136
--------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-------------

CHAPTER XVIII.

Elisha and the House of Jehu	140
------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

How the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah became involved with Assyria	147
--	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XX.

Ahaz and the Fall of Samaria	155
------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

Hezekiah	159
----------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

The Last Days of the Kingdom of Judah	167
---------------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Captivity	173
---------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Return, and the Settlement in Judah	178
---	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

The Geography of Palestine	187
----------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

Light thrown on the History of the Hebrews by Recent Discoveries	196
---	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

	PAGE
TABLES 	201
1. The Descendants of Terah and Abraham,	
2. The chief Festivals and Holy Seasons.	
3. Sacrifices.	
4. Kings of Israel and Judah.	
5. Priests and Prophets.	
6. Leading Dates in Assyrian, Babylonian, and Per- sian History.	
INDEX 	209

CHAPTER I.

PRIMITIVE HISTORY.

Genesis I.—XI.

Israelitish
traditions.

When the Hebrews emerge into the full light of history we find them in possession of a series of remarkable traditions, extending back to the Creation of the world. Most of these state that the original home of the human race was somewhere near the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris, and that the Hebrews were the offshoot of a nation that made its home in Babylonia. In this country therefore the scene of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is laid.

Modern scholars have discovered many ancient traditions which are very interesting when compared with those in the Old Testament, as they tend to prove that many of the stories in the first eleven chapters of Genesis had a Babylonian origin, and were originally current among people who worshipped many gods. But the writers to whom we owe their preservation in Scripture worshipped but one God, and attributed all things to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

The
Creation.

There are two narratives of the Creation in Genesis; for in the middle of the fourth verse of the second chapter we have another account, which is probably earlier than that in Genesis i.

The first chapter is far more orderly in arrangement than the second. Notice, for example, how the "days" of Creation are grouped in pairs.

1st Day }	Division	{ Light from Darkness.
2nd Day }		{ Waters from Waters.
3rd Day }	Inanimate	{ The Dry Land and Plants.
4th Day }	Nature	{ The Heavenly Luminaries.
5th Day }	Animate	{ Birds and Fishes.
6th Day }	Nature	{ Beasts and MAN.

The Fall of Man. In the account in the second chapter we find that the earth is described as hard and dry because no rain had as yet fallen, and there was no one to till it, till man (Adam) was formed out of the dust of the ground, and a garden planted in Eden for his habitation. From this delightful spot issued a stream, from which flowed the four great rivers of the world—Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. There stood the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. As the man was alone the beasts were formed to be his companions, but none of them was suitable. Jehovah therefore caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and woman was taken from his side. The Serpent, the craftiest of all beasts, persuaded the woman to eat of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus did man fall, and was cast out of Eden to till the ground, which for his sake was accursed. He was not, however, bereft of all hope; for an assurance was given that the Seed of the woman would bruise the Serpent's head.

Cain and Abel. In the story of the two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, Cain is described as a tiller of the ground, and Abel as a keeper of sheep. Sacrifice is already the natural mode of worship. Cain was offering of the fruit of the ground, Abel of his flock. Abel's offering was accepted. Cain was deeply offended at the rejection of his sacrifice. His *countenance fell*. Jehovah is represented as reasoning with him: *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at*

the door, desiring to reduce his victim to subjection. Yet sin can be overcome: *Thou shalt rule over him*. But Cain disregarded the Divine warning, enticed Abel into the field and slew him. So Jehovah appeared and told the murderer, *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground*. Cain feared that men would avenge his brother's death, so Jehovah set a "mark" upon him, or possibly "gave him a sign", lest any finding him should kill him. (Gen. iv. 15.)

After this Cain is said to have had a son called Enoch, and to have founded a city, called after his son, in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (Gen. iv. 16-17.)

Difficulties. As many difficult questions have been asked in connection with this story, such as "Who was Cain's wife, if, as seems to be implied, only Adam, Eve, and their sons inhabited the world?" we must bear in mind that when the Hebrews left their ancient home they brought with them many traditions of the past history of their race. When these ancient stories were committed to writing, the writers desired to trace in everything the work of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Their motive seems to have been to inculcate the duty of resisting sin and the character of true sacrifice.

They may have further wished to demonstrate that murder was one of the many terrible effects of the Fall.

Thus the story of Cain and Abel may be one detached from its original context. It is possible that it was originally written to account for the hostility between the wandering peoples and the tillers of the soil; but as it stands, it is intended to teach the lessons we have indicated.

Lamech and his sons. A descendant of Cain, named Lamech, had two wives and three sons, besides a daughter of whom we know nothing except her name, Naamah. The sons were the inventors

of the arts of life, or, as they are styled, the "fathers" of the various callings of mankind. Jabal was the "father" of those who dwell in tents and have cattle, and Jubal of musicians. Tubal-Cain instructed the workers in brass and iron. Perhaps the "song" of Lamech to his wives (Gen. iv. 23, 24) celebrates the invention of the sword by this last-named son.

The Flood.

When we come to the story of the Flood we have a twofold account, just as we have in the story of Creation.

The earliest Hebrew narrative tells us that as man multiplied he became sinful. The sons of God (elohim) seeing that the daughters of men were fair, took them to wife, and a race of "giants" was born who had the presumption to defy Jehovah. (Gen. vi. 1-7.) At last the wickedness of mankind became so great that Jehovah determined to destroy the world. One pious man, Noah, found grace in His eyes. He was commanded to take the clean animals by sevens, and the others by pairs, and to enter an ark with his wife, his sons and their wives. Jehovah shut the door of the Ark, and a flood ensued lasting forty days. At the end of this time Noah sent forth a raven and a dove; the latter returned, and seven days later Noah sent her out again, and she came back with an olive leaf. Again Noah waited seven days before he released the dove, and this time he saw her no more. He then removed the covering of the Ark and found that the ground was dry. He came forth from the Ark and offered sacrifice. Jehovah *smelled the savour*, and said in His heart, *I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* (Gen. vi., vii., viii.)

When we turn to the second Flood narrative in the Bible, we find a detailed account of the building of the Ark, and its measurements. A covenant is promised;

Noah is ordered to take two of each sort of animal (no distinction being made between clean and unclean) and to provide food. His age is given, as also the exact day of the month on which the Flood began, as well as the fact that it lasted a year. The cause of the Flood is said to have been the opening of *the windows of heaven*, and the breaking up of *the fountains of the Great Deep*. Dates are given for the day on which the waters were dried up, and the depth of the water when at its height is stated. The covenant is given to Noah, and the bow is placed in the cloud as a sign that there shall not again be a universal flood.

**The Curse of
Canaan.**

Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Noah is said to have planted the vine; and in his sleep his younger son, Ham, treated his aged father with disrespect, while Shem and Japheth shewed him a more becoming reverence. When the patriarch awoke from his wine, he blessed Shem and Japheth, but cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, in the following words:—

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. (Gen. ix. 25-27.)

**Ancient
Geography.**

Genesis x. gives us the geographical ideas of the early Hebrews, who divided the world into three divisions, each peopled by descendants of a son of Noah.

- (1) Under the "sons of Japheth" we find the northern nations and those who lived in the coasts or "isles" west of Palestine.
- (2) Ham is the ancestor of the southern nations of the world, such as the Egyptians, the Canaanites, and the Ethiopians.

- (3) Shem is the ancestor of the nations akin to the Hebrews, who claim to have sprung from Shem's third son, Arpachshad.

**The Building
of Babel.**

The children of men were at first all of one language. They went together to the plain of Shinar, where they learned to use bricks instead of stone, and decided to build a city and a tower, in order that they might never be scattered abroad. But Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower, and declared that there was no end to human presumption. To prevent the completion of the city He confounded men's language, so that they could no more understand one another. So mankind was dispersed, and the city was called Babel, or Babylon, for the words are the same. (Gen. xi. 1-9.)

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The Hebrews brought their traditions from Babylonia.
- (2.) There are two narratives of the Creation and of the Flood.
- (3.) The story of Cain and Abel probably comes from a different source.
- (4.) All have one purpose, viz., to inculcate the Unity of God, the heinousness of sin, and the need of repentance.
- (5.) The world as known to the Hebrews divided among the sons of Noah.
- (6.) The building of Babel (Babylon).

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM.

Genesis XII.—XXV. 10.

The opening chapters of Genesis deal with the nations of the world known to the inhabitants of Western Asia. In them the history of mankind is traced from the garden to the city ; from innocence and peace to confusion and division ; from Eden to Babel.

In the twelfth and following chapters we are given an account, not of nations, but of individuals who became the ancestors of the chosen people of Jehovah.

It is not clear where the first call came to Abram (or Abraham as he was afterwards called), whether in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. xi. 28), in Mesopotamia (Acts vii. 2), or at Haran (Gen. xii. 4).

We know, however, that he became a wanderer in obedience to a Divine Call, and that in company with his wife Sarai or Sarah, and Lot, his brother's son, he crossed the Euphrates and journeyed to the land of Canaan. The rest of his family remained settled in Paddan-Aram in Mesopotamia, the city of Nahor. (Gen. xxiv. 10.)

On his arrival in Canaan he halted at the Oak of Moreh near Shechem, where he erected an altar to Jehovah, and did the same between Bethel and Ai. Owing to stress of famine he went down to Egypt, where he shewed what seems to us an unaccountable want of faith. Dreading lest Pharaoh should kill him for the sake of Sarai his wife, he made her call herself his sister. But the truth was revealed by signs of

Abraham in
Canaan and
Egypt;

God's displeasure with Egypt. (Gen. xii. 10-20.) We are told he was guilty of the same fault some years later, when he dwelt with Abimelech, king of Gerar. (Gen. xx.)

**Separates
from Lot.**

On his return to Canaan, Abraham went to Bethel. Here a strife arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot, as their flocks were by this time too great to pasture together. So for the sake of peace, Abraham proposed they should separate after dividing the land between them. He offered the choice to his nephew; and Lot, regarding the rich soil of the Jordan valley as affording wealth and ease, decided to go thither, notwithstanding the fact that the men of Sodom were *sinner before Jehovah*. After Lot's departure Abraham went and dwelt in Hebron, where God renewed His promise that the land should belong to his seed.

**Revelations of
God to
Abraham.**

At this point it would be well to interrupt for a while the course of the narrative, in order that we may trace the gradual and progressive character of God's revelation to Abraham as shewn forth in the eight promises made to him. For it was only by degrees that the patriarch learned the destiny in store for his posterity.

The promises are as follows:—

- (1) When Jehovah told him to leave his father's house, He promised
 - (a) he should be a great nation, and
 - (b) that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. xii. 1-2.)
- (2) On his arrival in Canaan, he was told that this was the land promised to his seed. (Gen. xii. 7.)
- (3) At Hebron, after Abraham's separation from Lot, this promise was renewed. (Gen. xiii. 14-15.)

- (4) After the defeat of Chedorlaomer, Abraham was told that his own son should inherit the land. We are told here that Abraham's faith was *counted to him for righteousness*. (Gen. xv. 6.)
- (5) Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael
 - (a) the covenant of circumcision was given,
 - (b) the names Abram and Sarai were changed to Abraham and Sarah,
 - (c) a son was promised to Sarah, who should be called Isaac (possibly Isaac-el, God laughs: so Jacob-el, Joseph-el). (Gen. xvii.)
- (6) This last promise was repeated by the three Angels. On this occasion Sarah *laughed* at the thought of one as old as she was having a son. (Gen. xviii.)
- (7) When Hagar and Ishmael were cast forth, Abraham was told, *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*. (Gen. xxi. 12.)
- (8) At the time of the offering of Isaac promises were repeated in an even stronger form, because Abraham had not withheld his only son from Jehovah. (Gen. xxii. 16-18.)

Invasion of Chedorlaomer. Some time after Lot had settled in the land of Sodom, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and his allies invaded Canaan and defeated the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Z-boim, and Zoar, in the Vale of Siddim, north of the Dead Sea. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were slain, and Lot was carried away captive. Laden with spoil, the allies proceeded northwards till they were overtaken by Abraham at Dan, who defeated them and recovered Lot and the spoil. On his return the king of Sodom met Abraham, and as a reward offered him the spoil. This Abraham refused, *lest he should say, I have made Abraham rich*. (Gen. xiv. 23.) He was

also met at this time by Melchizedek, king of Salem, *priest of the Most High God*, who *brought forth bread and wine* and blessed him. Abraham in return *gave him tithes of all*. (Gen. xiv. 17-20.)

Birth of
Ishmael.

Jehovah next made a covenant with Abraham, and promised that his son should inherit the Land. (Gen. xv.) A son (Ishmael) was accordingly born by his handmaid, Hagar the Egyptian, when he was eighty-six years of age, and had been ten years in the land of Canaan. As, however, Sarai was jealous of Hagar, and *dealt hardly with her*, before the child was born his mother fled to the wilderness, where she was found by an angel near a fountain of water, who told her to return to her mistress, saying the son she was about to bear would be *a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him*, and that he would be the father of a great multitude. Hagar returned, after calling the well Beer-lahai-roi (the well of the Living God that sees me). In due time her son was born, and she called him Ishmael (God hears), as the angel had commanded her. Thirteen years after his birth the covenant of circumcision was given, the names Abram and Sarai were changed to Abraham and Sarah, and a son was promised to Sarah.

Birth of Isaac.

After this three men appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre as he sat in his tent door in the heat of the day, who promised that Sarah should have a son. Sarah was reproved for having laughed because she thought she was too old. *Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?* (Gen. xviii. 13, 14.)

In this way the birth of Isaac was foretold; and the child was borne by Sarah when Abraham was one hundred years old. When the child was weaned Abraham made a

great feast. On this occasion Sarah is said to have seen Ishmael the son of Hagar mocking the infant Isaac, and she exhorted Abraham to *cast out the bondwoman and her son*. This thing was very grievous in his sight, but God comforted him by telling him that *in Isaac should his seed be called*, but that He would also make of the son of the bondwoman a nation, *because he is thy seed*. (Gen. xxi. 13.)

Ishmael is
driven out.

Abraham accordingly sent Hagar and Ishmael with some provisions into the wilderness of Beersheba. When their supply of water was exhausted, the boy lay down to die of thirst; but an angel shewed his mother a well of water, and also promised her son should be a great nation. We are told that he afterwards dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, that he became an archer, and that he married an Egyptian wife. Twelve tribes are said to have sprung from Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 12ff.), who is generally regarded as the ancestor of the Arabs.

Lot escapes
from the Cities
of the Plain.

The men who foretold the birth of Isaac also told Abraham of the impending doom of Sodom and the cities of the plain, for *their sin was very grievous*. (Gen. xviii. 20.) Abraham interceded for them, and obtained the Divine promise that He would not destroy Sodom if He found even ten righteous men therein. But even this could not save the doomed cities, and only Lot, his wife, and his two daughters were delivered from Sodom, and told to escape for their lives; and Zoar, at Lot's entreaty, was spared. Just after he had entered Zoar, the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from heaven and utterly destroyed the cities of the plain. Lot's wife, however, looked back, and *became a pillar of salt*. (Gen. xix. 26.) On a mountain near Zoar, Lot begat two sons, Moab and Ammon, from whom were descended the Moabites and Ammonites.

**Offering of
Isaac.**

We now come to the story of the last and final test of Abraham's faith. *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* (Gen. xxii. 1, 2.)

And so the story goes on, telling in touching and simple language of the submission of the father to this awful test, and of the humble submission of the son to his father's will. How the sacrificial knife was already raised to slay, how the angel intervened at the last moment, and how a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns, was offered instead of his son.

The promise was renewed for the eighth and last time, even more emphatically than before; and Abraham returned to Beersheba, but not before he had called the place where he had been so sorely tried, Jehovah-Jireh (The Lord will provide).

**Death of
Sarah.**

The next important event in our narrative is the death of Sarah. This was the occasion of Abraham buying the field and cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite, as a burying place for himself and his descendants. This was the only spot owned by him in the Promised Land.

**Isaac marries
Rebekah.**

At last we come to the end of Abraham's long and eventful life, when the aged patriarch sent his faithful steward to Mesopotamia, his ancient home, to choose a wife for Isaac.

The servant, after swearing a solemn oath to be faithful to his trust, departed, and on his arrival at the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia, made his camels kneel down without the city walls by a well. He prayed to

the Lord God of his master Abraham that the damsel who acceded to his request that she should water his camels should be the one chosen to be Isaac's bride.

Rebekah, the daughter of Milcah the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came in answer to his prayer, satisfied the test, and consented to come back with him. Isaac met her on their return, and took her to wife. (Gen. xxiv.)

**Abraham's
Descendants.** It must, however, be carefully borne in mind that in the Old Testament story, Abraham is treated of not only as a man, but also as the progenitor of many tribes. Thus we have the story of Ishmael and of the twelve tribes of which he was ancestor. And we are also told of the marriage of Abraham with Keturah (Gen. xxv. 1-6), which apparently signifies that the tribes of the Eastern deserts were, when the book Genesis was written, considered as distant kinsmen of the races descended from Isaac and Ishmael.

It is an important fact that so exclusive a people as Israel should emphasise the fact that so many neighbouring peoples sprang from Abraham, the father of their faith; and when at the present day we see how Christians, Jews, and Mahommedans all trace their spiritual origin to the same source, we can indeed see the fulfilment of the Divine promise that his seed should be *as the stars for multitude*.

In all succeeding ages Abraham has been regarded as the great ideal of the race of Israel, to whom the Israelites ascribed the beginnings of their religious knowledge. It was the God of Abraham Whom Isaac and Jacob served. It was the God of Abraham Who appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush, and to Whom Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Whom our Lord testified that He was the God not of the dead but of the living.

In a word, those who lived before and those who lived after the Exile agree in regarding Abraham as the greatest of men, the model of piety to every Israelite.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The difference between the first eleven chapters of Genesis and those which follow lies in the fact, that while the former give an account of nations, the twelfth and following chapters deal with individuals who became the ancestors of God's chosen people.
- (2.) We gather from what we know of the life of Abraham that he was
 - (a) A wanderer by conviction, the first example of faith in God.
 - (b) That at least twice his faith failed him, *i.e.*
 - (a) in his visit to Egypt (Gen. xii. 10-20);
 - (b) in his sojourn with Abimelech, king of Gerar. (Gen. xx.)
 - (c) That the revelation given him by God was gradual and progressive. For instance, the promises made by God to him were eight in number, and each added something to the previous promise.
 - (d) That many tribes claim their descent from him, which was admitted by the exclusive Israelites.
 - (e) That he was rightly called *the friend of God*, as he was always ready to listen for Divine guidance in whatever way it should be manifested. (2 Chron. xx. 7; James ii. 23.)

CHAPTER III.

ISAAC AND JACOB.

Genesis xxv. 11—xxxviii.

Isaac.

Isaac is described as a man of peaceful life, given to meditation, and manifesting strong family affection. The events related of him bear a strong resemblance to those told of Abraham, as, for example, the deception of Abimelech, the strife between his herdsmen and those of the king of Gerar, and the renewal of the league between Abimelech and himself at Beersheba. He is also said to have dug three wells in southern Palestine—Sitnah, Esek, and Rehoboth. Isaac spent his days in the neighbourhood of Gerar, Beersheba, and Hebron.

Jacob.

The story of Jacob, the immediate ancestor of the Israelites, is told at some length, and is divisible into three main sections:—

(1) The rivalry between Jacob and Esau. (Gen. xxv. 27-34; xxvii.)

(2) Jacob's sojourn with Laban. (Gen. xxix.—xxxi.)

(3) Jacob's sojourn in Palestine and the doings of his sons. (Gen. xxxii.—xxxv., xxxvii., xxxviii.)

The clue to the story of the enmity between Jacob and Esau is the deep-seated rivalry between their descendants, Israel and Edom. The national characteristics appear in their ancestors. The strife between the two began in the womb, and at his birth Jacob received his name from his seizing his brother's heel. (Gen. xxv. 22-26.) Esau became a skilful hunter,

(1) **Rivalry
between
Esau and Jacob.**

while Jacob chose the life of a shepherd. Isaac preferred Esau, *because he did eat of his venison*; and Rebekah loved Jacob.

The Birthright and the Blessing. The first event recorded of the brothers brings into relief their different dispositions; for Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of red pottage (receiving on this occasion the name of Edom—red) which he saw his brother preparing one day when he returned from hunting. (Gen. xxv. 29-34.)

We next read how Jacob, at his mother's instigation, won his father's blessing from Esau by fraud (Gen. xxvii.), and was forced to flee from his brother's wrath.

In all literature there can be no story more pathetic than that of Esau's loss of the blessing. The blind father, deceived by the hairy gloves of Jacob, but suspicious of the tones of his voice, exclaimed, *The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*

Art thou my very son Esau? he asked; and Jacob said, *I am.* The smell of Esau's garments, which Jacob had assumed, deceived his father, who began the blessing with the words, *See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.* Nothing was withheld. On Jacob was bestowed a rich territory. (Gen. xxvii. 28, 29.)

Then Esau appeared and learned how Isaac had been duped. He uttered an *exceeding bitter cry*, saying of his brother, *Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and now he hath taken away my blessing.*

But although Isaac could not give his beloved son a blessing like that of Jacob, he could, however, promise him a not ignoble future. Esau was to live by his sword in a less favoured land, a subject to his younger brother.

But the day would come when his descendants would *shake his yoke from off their neck*. (Gen. xxvii. 39, 40.)

To the grief of his parents, Esau married two Hittite wives. Afterwards, to please them, he took a daughter of Ishmael. His home was in Seir (the rough) in the land of Edom (red, see above), and he became the leader of a band of four hundred men.

Jacob's flight. Though he had obtained the blessing,

Jacob was obliged to escape from the vengeance of Esau; and when he left his father's home, he went, at his mother's suggestion, to his uncle Laban in Haran, in order to take a wife from his own kindred. (Gen. xxviii. 2.) On the first night after his flight he saw at Bethel a vision of a ladder, or stairway, set up between earth and heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Here the promise made to Abraham was repeated, and Jacob received the assurance of Divine protection.

(2) Jacob's
sojourn with
Laban.

Jacob, at the end of his journey, *came into the land of the people of the east*.

(Gen. xxix. 1.) Here he met Rachel, the daughter of Laban, and helped her

to water her flock; and Laban received him as a welcome guest. At the end of a month Jacob agreed to serve his uncle seven years for Rachel, his younger daughter; but at the end of that time Laban gave him his elder daughter, Leah; and made Jacob serve another seven years for Rachel.

At the end of the fourteen years Jacob asked to be allowed to depart; but Laban besought him to remain, promising him all the speckled or spotted kids and the lambs that should be born black. By skilful management Jacob contrived that all the best kids should be his, although his wages were constantly changed. (Gen. xxx. 32; xxxi. 41.)

Jacob's Sons. During his sojourn in Haran, Jacob became the father of eleven sons, each one of whom bore a name suitable to the circumstances of his birth. By Leah were born Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah. (Gen. xxix. 31-35.) The two handmaids then bore Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher. (xxx. 1-13.) Three more children were then borne by Leah—Issachar, Zebulon and a daughter, Dinah. (xxx. 14-21.) Finally Rachel bore Joseph (addition), because she prophesied, *Jehovah shall add to me another son.* (xxx. 22-24.)

Jacob's return. At last Jacob saw that he was no longer in favour with Laban and his sons, and decided to leave Haran when his uncle was absent sheep-shearing. So he departed with his wives, children, and possessions, Rachel taking with her the teraphim, or household gods of the family. Laban pursued him, but being warned of God in a dream to do him no harm, he made a covenant with Jacob by setting up a pillar, which Jacob called GALEED, and Laban gave it the Syriac name JEGAR-SAHADUTHA—both words signifying The heap of witness. It was also called MIZPAH (The watch tower), for Laban said: *The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*

(3) **Jacob's sojourn in Eastern Palestine. Mahanaim and Peniel.** When Jacob came near his native home he entered upon a series of spiritual experiences. It seems as if all that went before was but a preparation for the stamp of sanctity or dedication which was now about to be impressed on him. As he journeyed, the Angels of God met him, and exclaiming *This is God's host*, he gave to the place the name of Mahanaim (two hosts). (Gen. xxxii. 2.) On hearing that Esau was advancing to meet him

at the head of four hundred men, Jacob, after fervent prayer, divided his household into companies and sent them across the brook Jabbok; and himself remained alone. We are then told that *there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

Throughout the night the issue of the conflict was doubtful; the mysterious Adversary touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and the sinew shrank, making him thenceforth lame; but in the end his name was changed from Jacob to Israel (God striveth). The awe-struck patriarch named the spot Peniel (The face of God), *for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* (Gen. xxxii. 24-31.)

Jacob's meeting next day with Esau resulted in a full reconciliation. He then left his brother, and made his last halt in Eastern Palestine at Succoth, a city which took its name from the booths which the patriarch erected there. (Gen. xxxiii. 1-17.)

**Jacob
in Western
Palestine.**

On his entry into Western Palestine Jacob dwelt in Shechem, where he bought land from Hamor, the father of Shechem.

His sojourn there was interrupted, owing to the treacherous slaughter of Hamor and his men by Simeon and Levi, after making a treaty with them in order that Shechem might marry their sister Dinah. (Gen. xxxiv.) From Shechem he went to Bethel by Divine command. Here he erected an altar to God, and here also Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, died, and was buried at Allon-bacuth (The oak of weeping). Thence he went southward to Ephrath, where Rachel gave birth to his youngest son, calling him, *as her soul was in departing*, Ben-oni (Son of my sorrow), a name which Jacob changed to Ben-jamin (Son of my right hand).

About this time Isaac died, and was buried by his two sons, Esau and Jacob.

**Contrast
between the
religion of
Abraham and of
Jacob.**

In concluding this chapter, it is interesting to compare the religious observances of Abraham and Jacob, as they tend to shew a falling off from the ancient simplicity of the former patriarch.

In the days of Abraham the intercourse between God and man is unrestrained. With Abraham God talked face to face. (Gen. xii. 2, 3, xiii. 14, xviii. 1.) Not so with Jacob, with whom God communicated through angels as intermediaries.

Abraham's rites of worship were few and simple; with Jacob religious observances multiplied, and many of them led later on to superstition and idolatry.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The account given in Genesis of Isaac is very brief, and many of the events recorded bear a strong resemblance to those told of Abraham.
- (2.) The story of Jacob is given at some length, and can be divided into three sections:
 - (1) His rivalry with Esau.
 - (2) Flight to Laban.
 - (3) Return to Palestine.
- (3.) Leading incidents in the life of Jacob.
 - (a) His obtaining the blessing by deceit.
 - (b) His flight, and vision at Bethel.
 - (c) His sojourn with Laban and the deception practised on him by the substitution of Leah for Rachel.
 - (d) Birth of eleven of his sons whilst in Laban's service.

- (e) His flight and covenant with Laban at Mizpah.
- (f) His spiritual experiences, and meeting with Esau.
- (g) His trouble with his sons at Shechem.
- (h) The burial of his father near Mamre, with Abraham and Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah.

CHAPTER IV.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

Genesis XXXIX.—Exodus XII.

Throughout the patriarchal period the ties which bound the descendants of Abraham to their kindred in Mesopotamia had been gradually relaxing, and after Jacob's flight from Laban the Hebrews ceased to feel any attraction towards their original home. In times of distress, even Abraham and Isaac had directed their thoughts to Egypt, and Jacob's sons followed their example. A reception was prepared for them in which the guiding hand of God is clearly to be recognised.

Joseph. We now come to the story of Joseph, which by its simplicity and pathos impresses the minds of all who read it with the knowledge that God overrules everything for good.

Joseph was the son of Jacob's favourite wife, Rachel, and as he was born after the lapse of many years of married life, he was the son of Jacob's old age. His father designated him as the future head of his family, and as a token of his intention clothed him in the garment of a chief, by giving him *a coat of many colours*.

His brethren were naturally jealous of him; and this feeling was increased when Joseph related how in his dreams his brethren and even his father and mother bowed down to him.

The crisis in his life came when his father sent him with a message to his brethren to the place where they were tending sheep.

At his approach they said, *Behold, this dreamer cometh.* And they decided to make away with him. Reuben, in an ineffective way, tried to save him from his brothers' wrath, but in his absence they sold Joseph as a slave to some Midianitish merchants who were going to Egypt. They deceived their father by dipping his son's coat in the blood of a kid. This they brought to their father, and said, *This have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.* (Gen. xxxvii. 32-34.)

**Joseph in
Captivity.**

Joseph, in Egypt, became the trusted servant of Potiphar, the Captain of the Guard. But owing to a slanderous accusation by Potiphar's wife, he was put in prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. (Gen. xxxix. 21-22.)

It was while he was thus employed that he met with two great officers of Pharaoh's court, his chief butler and his chief baker, who had been cast into prison.

One morning, when Joseph came in to them he found them both sad, for they had each dreamed dreams they did not understand. Joseph interpreted the dream of the chief butler—in which he saw a vine with three branches, which blossomed and bore grapes which he pressed into Pharaoh's cup—as a sign that in three days he would be restored to favour. He took the opportunity of imploring him to remember to intercede for him when he himself was freed. The chief baker's dream was not

so propitious. In the vision of the three baskets full of baked meats which the birds did eat out of the uppermost basket, Joseph saw a token that in three days the unfortunate man would fall a victim to Pharaoh's vengeance.

**Joseph at
Court.**

The chief butler forgot Joseph for *two full years*. At the end of that time Pharaoh had in one night two dreams, which none of his magicians could interpret. (Gen. xli. 1-8.)

In the first he dreamed that he stood by the river Nile, out of which seven fat kine came up, who were speedily devoured by seven lean kine who followed them.

In the second dream he dreamed that seven full ears of corn came up on one stalk, which were devoured by seven ears blasted by the east wind. When no interpreter could be found, the chief butler remembered his fault and mentioned Joseph and his power of interpretation.

**Joseph's
promotion.**

Joseph was hurriedly summoned from prison, and explained the dream, as a prediction of seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine; and he advised Pharaoh to provide against the years of scarcity during the time of the good harvests. For this he was made chief ruler in Egypt. An Egyptian wife, Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, was given him, and his name was changed to that of ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH (Revealer of secrets). (Gen. xli. 45.)

During the seven years of plenty Joseph collected all the corn and stored it in granaries, selling it in the years of famine to the Egyptians for money; and when that failed, for cattle and land, which latter he restored to the cultivators for an annual payment to the Crown of a fifth of their produce. He also sold corn to foreign nations, who were also suffering from famine.

**Joseph and
his Brethren.**

Among these were the sons of Jacob, who went down into Egypt to buy corn. On their first visit Joseph pretended to mistake them for spies, and detained Simeon as a hostage for their return, refusing to see them unless they brought their brother Benjamin. When they reached their father's house, they found to their alarm that the money they had paid for the corn had been replaced in their sacks. Later, when corn was urgently needed, Judah and Reuben, after long persuasion, prevailed upon their father to consent to Benjamin's going down to Egypt. This time they took double money, and a present for the ruler. On their arrival they were well received. Simeon was restored to them, and a grand banquet was prepared. During the feast Joseph sent Benjamin a five-fold portion. On their departure Joseph commanded his steward to put his divining-cup (Gen. xlv. 2-5) into Benjamin's sack, and then to send officers to arrest the supposed thief. But when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, all the brethren returned to intercede for him. Joseph was so touched, that he made himself known to them; and as there were still five more years of famine in store, he sent for his father, Jacob, and his household. (Gen. xlv.)

When Jacob heard that Joseph was alive, he offered sacrifice at Beersheba, and, encouraged by a vision, went down with his family to Egypt. In their new settlement of Goshen (or Geshem) of Arabia, they long enjoyed independence and high consideration, for Pharaoh's cattle were entrusted to their care.

**Last days of
Jacob.**

We now come to the close of the eventful life of Jacob, the last seventeen years of which he spent in Egypt. When *the time drew nigh that Israel must die* (Gen. xlvii. 29), he called his son Joseph to him, and adopted his two grandsons Manasseh and

Ephraim, granting them the same honours as his first-born.

But when he blessed them he gave the pre-eminence to Ephraim, the younger son, explaining that though Manasseh would be the father of a great tribe, Ephraim would be the father of a greater.

Before his death Jacob told his sons in poetical language the future destiny of the twelve tribes which were to spring from them. (Gen. xlix.) After this he adjured his sons to bury him with his fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. Accordingly, after his death he was embalmed and carried to Canaan, and the place where the Egyptians mourned him was known as ABEL-MIZRAIM. (Gen. l. 11).

**The Writer of
the Story of
Joseph.**

Before we leave the story of Joseph we must not omit the interesting fact that the writer of that story, if he was not an Egyptian, at least had a personal knowledge of the country. For we are told that

(a) in Pharaoh's dream the cattle stand in the reed-grass by the Nile. (Gen. xli. 3.)

(b) Joseph is raised to his office in the Egyptian manner. (Gen. xli. 42.)

(c) The name of his wife, Asenath, is Egyptian, and so is the title bestowed on him by Pharaoh. (Gen. xli. 45.)

(d) The fifth of the produce has from time immemorial been considered the proper tax on land in Egypt. (Gen. xli. 34, xlvii. 24.)

(e) The exclusiveness of the Egyptians in not eating with foreigners is dwelt upon. (Gen. xliii. 32, xlvi. 34.)

(f) Embalming the dead is mentioned as practised. (Gen. l. 2, 26.)

After the death of Joseph, we are told nothing but that *there arose up a new king over Egypt, which*

knew not Joseph. (Ex. i. 8.) This king was probably Rameses II., the great warrior and builder, of the nineteenth dynasty. He has been identified with the Pharaoh of the Oppression by the statement in Exodus i. 11 that the Israelites built the treasure-cities Pithom and Rameses. It is possible, however, that the "new king" really means a new dynasty, which adopted a different policy towards foreigners, and forced the Israelites, though originally free shepherds, to labour at building. The oppression evidently continued for many years, and was especially severe when Moses, the great deliverer, was born.

Moses. He was the son of Jochebed, the wife
His Birth of Amram the Levite. (Ex. vi. 20.) In
and spite of the royal edict (Ex. i. 15-22),
Education. ordering all the male children of the Hebrews to be cast into the Nile, his mother kept him concealed for three months. At the end of that time she made an ark of papyrus leaves and laid it in the flags by the river's bank. The child was found by Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him and gave him the name of Moses (according to the book of Exodus from *mashah*, to draw out), which some say is Coptic (saved from the water), (Ex. ii. 10, margin), but is more probably connected with an Egyptian word meaning "prince". By the connivance of his sister, his mother was chosen to be his nurse. (Ex. ii. 7, 8.) He was trained *in all the wisdom of the Egyptians* and was *mighty in word and deed.* (Acts vii. 22.)

At the age of forty years he championed the oppressed, and had to flee from Egypt because he killed an Egyptian for smiting a Hebrew. He escaped to the land of Midian, where his first act in exile was to defend the women at a well, whom some shepherds were preventing from watering their flocks. These turned out to be the daughters of

Flight of
Moses.

Jethro, high-priest of Midian, one of whom, Zipporah, he married, and by her became the father of two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

**The Burning
Bush.**

After forty years, God appeared to Moses in Horeb, the sacred mount of Midian, in a bush which burned but was not consumed, and commanded him to go into Egypt and deliver the Israelites from bondage.

He received there

(a) A token that *when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.* (Ex. iii. 12.)

(b) The knowledge of the Name of God, I AM.*
(Ex. iii. 1-15, vi. 1-8.)

(c) Three signs as a proof of his mission :—

(i) The rod in his hand became a serpent when cast upon the ground, and resumed its original form when Moses seized it.

(ii) His hand became leprous when placed in the fold of his garment and withdrawn, but was made whole when he repeated the sign.

(iii) He was given the power of turning water into blood. (Ex. iv. 1-9.)

After some hesitation Moses accepted the Divine commission, and went to Egypt with the consent and approval of Jethro. On his return he met his brother Aaron the Levite, who was to accompany him as prophet and spokesman.

**Moses before
Pharaoh.**

When the brothers first came before Pharaoh with the request that he would let the people go, he not only refused, but added to their burdens, asserting that *I know not Jehovah*; and the struggle between Moses and Pharaoh

* The word JEHOVAH is composed of the consonants J H V H, from the root HVH, to become. The vowels are those of *Adonay*, Lord, which the Hebrews use instead of the NAME, from motives of reverence

became a religious one, to prove to that proud monarch that Jehovah was more powerful than the gods of Egypt. Hence the ten plagues were mostly exaggerations of phenomena natural to the country, and were directed against all that were held in reverence by its inhabitants. They were as follows:—

- (1) Water turned into blood. (Ex. vii. 14-24.)
- (2) Frogs. (Ex. viii. 1-15.)
- (3) Lice. (Ex. viii. 16-19.)
- (4) Flies. (Ex. viii. 20-32.)
- (5) A murrain on the cattle of the Egyptians. (Ex. ix. 1-7.)
- (6) Boils. (Ex. ix. 8-12.)
- (7) Thunder and hail. (Ex. ix. 13-35.)
- (8) Locusts. (Ex. x. 1-20.)
- (9) Thick darkness. (Ex. x. 21-29.)
- (10) The slaying of the first-born. (Ex. xi. 4-6; xii. 29, 30.)

After this last plague, the Egyptians thrust out the Hebrews, who marched out like a victorious army, spoiling the Egyptians before they withdrew. (Ex. xii. 34-36.)

The effects of this last plague were averted by the Israelites, owing to the fact that Moses summoned the elders of Israel and commanded them to take lambs according to their families, and to *kill the Passover*. The blood of the victims was to be sprinkled on the lintel and side-posts of the door of every house, that the destroying Angel might *pass over* and spare it. The feast was to be observed as an ordinance for ever.

The story of the Exodus is most important, as the pivot on which the history of Israel turns. It was because they believed that God had brought them out of Egypt that the people became what they were, and are.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The sale of Joseph into Egypt by his brethren led to great results, not only on the history of Egypt, but on that of the Hebrew race. For his knowledge of the interpretation of dreams
 - (a) saved the land of Egypt from famine ;
 - (b) increased the power of Pharaoh, as in the lean years the people mortgaged their land to him, giving him a fifth of the produce ;
 - (c) gave him supreme power in Egypt next to Pharaoh, and so
 - (d) enabled him to settle his father and brethren in the land of Goshen as Pharaoh's herdsmen.
- (2.) The death of Jacob was marked by the Blessing of his Sons, and the allotment of their future tribal inheritance.
- (3.) There are certain difficulties about the date of the Story of Joseph, but most scholars are agreed that the Pharaoh of the Oppression was Rameses II., the great warrior and builder, of the nineteenth dynasty.
- (4.) Moses, the son of Amram the Levite, was raised up as the deliverer of his oppressed fellow countrymen.
 - (a) As an infant he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, who brought him up as her own son.
 - (b) At the age of forty years he fled from Egypt, owing to his over-zealous championship of his countrymen.
 - (c) He lived in Midian forty years, where he married Jethro's daughter, and had two sons.

- (d) At the end of that period he was commanded by God in the Burning Bush to go down into Egypt and deliver His people.
- (e) The history of his interviews with Pharaoh and the Ten Plagues then follows, culminating with the Institution of the Passover and the hurried departure of the Hebrews from the land of bondage.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT OF ISRAEL, AND THE WANDERINGS, UP TO SINAI.

Exodus XII.—XIX.

The people who followed Moses were not as yet worthy of the name of a nation; for

- (a) Joined as they were by a mixed multitude of fugitives, they lacked order, cohesion, discipline.
- (b) Without experience of a wandering life, they looked to Moses for help, and above all for food and water.
- (c) The vices, which years of slavery had engendered, caused them to be faithless, easily discouraged, and often ready to give up all they had won and to return to the house of bondage.

In the book of Micah we read that the three deliverers of Israel were MOSES, AARON, and MIRIAM. AARON's eloquence probably was the cause of the people making up their minds to throw off the yoke of Egypt; while MIRIAM, as a prophetess, had taken the lead among the women of Israel to incite their husbands to try for freedom. But we shall see later on that Moses could not always rely upon their loyalty. MOSES was a solitary figure. On his shoulders fell the burden of guiding the people through the deserts and welding them into a nation. He was known to fame as having been the most patient (*i.e.* enduring) of men.

**The Flight of
Israel.**

After the Israelites had been thrust out by Pharaoh, they made straight for the desert instead of taking the more direct route, *the way of the Philistines*. This was owing to a Divine command, for *God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.* (Ex. xiii. 17.) This road was barred by Egyptian fortresses, as well as being the one by which the Canaanites would be constantly on the watch against invaders. So as the longer way was in the case of this emigrant horde the safer, they directed their course to the desert, which lay to the east of Goshen, journeying from Rameses to Succoth and encamping at Etham *in the edge of the wilderness*. The nation went out armed, and the bones of the patriarch Joseph accompanied its march. (Ex. xiii. 18-19.) The way was miraculously shewn them by a pillar of cloud which became a pillar of fire by night.

**The Crossing of
the Red Sea.**

As soon as the Egyptians had recovered from their panic they resolved to overtake the Israelites, and if possible to detain them by force. Several records of the overthrow of the hosts of Pharaoh are preserved in the Book of Exodus :—

- (1) The Song of Moses in Exodus xv. This song celebrates Jehovah as casting Pharaoh's hosts into the sea. The refrain of this triumphant ode was sung by Miriam, the sister of Aaron, who went forth, timbrel in hand, at the head of the Hebrew women. (Ex. xv. 20.)
- (2) One narrative in Exodus xiv. tells us that when Pharaoh drew near, Jehovah told Moses and his army to *Go forward*. The Israelites were protected by the pillar of fire and cloud; and during the night a strong east wind divided the waters. At the same time Jehovah troubled

the Egyptians and bound their chariot wheels. In the morning the sea returned in its strength, and Jehovah *shook off* the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

- (3) The other account is the work of a writer who knew Egypt well. Here the Israelites are commanded to turn back from Etham and to encamp between Pi-hahiroth and the sea. Pharaoh exulted because he thought they were *entangled in the land*. The people in turn reproached Moses, but he stretched forth his hand and the waters were divided, so that the Israelites went over as on dry land, while after Moses had stretched forth his hand again, the Egyptians were swallowed up by the sea.

The Journey to Sinai. The exact route of the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea is not known, but the following places are recorded as

halting stations:—

MARAH, in the Wilderness of Shur, where the bitter water in the pools was made sweet when Moses cast a tree into them. (Exodus xv. 23-25.)

ELIM, with its twelve pools and seventy palm trees.

The Wilderness of SIN, *which is between Elim and Sinai* (Exodus xvi. 1), where the people murmured, as they had done at Marah.

The Manna. Jehovah then promised to *rain down bread from heaven*; and when the people presented themselves before Him, His glory appeared in the cloud. Moses was commanded to assure the people *At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread*. In the evening quail came in such abundance that they covered the camp, and in the morning, *when the dew that lay was gone up*, a substance with the appearance of hoar frost was seen

upon the ground. It received the name of Manna, from the expression of the people as they beheld it, *Man hu* ('tis a gift), and was Israel's chief food throughout the wanderings. A double portion was given every sixth day, in order that the Sabbath might not be profaned; and it was also supplied in such a way that no one could gather more than another. *He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.* (Exodus xvi. 4-36.)

Amalek.

The next halting place was REPHIDIM, where water again failed, but was procured by Moses striking the rock in Horeb, and the place was called MASSAH and MERIBAH. Here the first battle was fought with the Amalekites, who were defeated by Joshua, aided by the prayers of Moses, whose outstretched arms were supported by Aaron and Hur, as whenever they ceased to be uplifted, Amalek prevailed. An Altar was erected here, called JEHOVAH NISSI (Jehovah is my banner).

At REPHIDIM Jethro restored to Moses his wife Zipporah and his sons Gershom and Eliezer. (Ex. xviii. 1-12.) And at his suggestion Moses appointed rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, to help him to judge the people.

Israel reached SINAI in the third month after their departure from Egypt. This was probably the place where Moses had received his commission and had seen the vision of the Burning Bush; for he had been told *When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt ye shall serve God upon this mountain.* (Ex. iii. 12.) The names Sinai and Horeb probably mean the same place, the traditional site of which is the extremity of the peninsula between the two gulfs of the Red Sea, though, as will be seen in the next chapter, this is disputed.

SUMMARY.

The Israelites leave Egypt, not by *the way of the Philistines*, but by the desert.

Their halting-places are :

Before crossing the Red Sea—

- (1) Rameses ;
- (2) Succoth ;
- (3) Etham, on the edge of the Wilderness.

After crossing the Red Sea—

- (4) Marah ;
- (5) Elim ;
- (6) The Wilderness of Sin (the Manna) ;
- (7) Rephidim (the battle with Amalek) ;
- (8) Sinai in the third month.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COVENANT; THE TABERNACLE; ISRAEL'S APOSTASY.

Exodus XX.—XL.

The peninsula of Sinai, the traditional situation of the Mount of the Law, was an ancient possession of Egypt, highly valued because of its turquoise mines, which strong garrisons of Egyptian troops were posted to guard. It is possible, therefore, that Mount Sinai was in Edom or Midian, and this is in some measure borne out by the Bible. See Judges v. 4, 5; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Hab. iii. 3; Gal. iv. 25, *Mount Sinai in Arabia*.

The Ten Words. When the people arrived at Sinai three days were set apart in order that due preparation might be made by Israel to meet their God. All the people were instructed to wash their garments and to sanctify themselves. If man or beast so much as touched the mountain, the penalty was death. The culprit must be stoned or shot through, for no human hand might be laid upon one who had been in contact with so holy a spot. (Ex. xix. 9-25.) At this supreme moment, Jehovah, amid thunderings and lightnings, proclaimed His Will in the Ten Words or Commandments which have been accepted by all as the basis of man's duty to God and his neighbour. These Ten Words stand by themselves as the only law spoken by Jehovah to the whole nation of Israel. They teach that devotion to God and conduct are the essence of true religion.

So terrified were the people by the Voice they had heard, that they begged that the remainder of the message

might be given to them through a mediator, and Moses once more entered into the thick darkness. But we may gather from the Sacred Narrative that the subsequent Laws were regarded as inferior to the Ten Words, because they did not come to the nation direct from Jehovah.

**The Book of
the Covenant.**

The laws contained in the oldest documents are included in the Book of the Covenant, so called on the occasion of its delivery by Moses to Israel. (Ex. xxiv. 7, 8.) This code seems to be in a sense the foundation of the polity of Israel. The laws in it deal with

- (1) Religious worship,
- (2) Persons,
- (3) Property.

- (1) With regard to religious observances the Book of the Covenant divides Sacrifices into two classes:

- (a) Burnt offerings,
- (b) Peace offerings.

Altars are to be made of earth, or of unhewn stones, without steps. (Ex. xx. 24-26.)

Jehovah claims as His right

- (a) The first-born son. (Ex. xxii. 29.)
- (b) The first-born of all cattle. (Ex. xxii. 30.)
- (c) The seventh day. (Ex. xxiii. 12.)
- (d) The seventh year. (Ex. xxiii. 11.)

The three feasts at which all males are ordered to appear before Jehovah are those of

- (a) Unleavened Bread, in memory of Israel's coming forth from Egypt in the month Abib. (Ex. xxiii. 15.)
- (b) Harvest, *the first-fruits of thy labours.* (Ex. xxiii. 16.)
- (c) Ingathering, *when thou gatherest in thy labours.* (Ex. xxiii. 16.)

Three further precepts are given:

- (a) No leavened bread must be used in Sacrifices. (Ex. xxiii. 18.)
 - (b) First-fruits are to be brought to the house of Jehovah. (Ex. xxiii. 19.)
 - (c) *Thou shalt not suck the milk of a kid in its mother's milk.* (Ex. xxiii. 19.)
- (2) Under the laws regarding Persons, the slave had rights:—
- (a) If under chastisement he lost eye or tooth, he was to be set free. (Ex. xxi. 26, 27.)
 - (b) If a master killed a slave, he was liable to punishment. (Ex. xxi. 20, 21.)
 - (c) No Hebrew slave could be kept for more than six years, except of his own free will. But if his master had given him a wife, he could only retain her by consenting to remain in bondage for life.
 - (d) The honour of female slaves was scrupulously regarded, and no Hebrew woman could be sold to a foreigner. (Ex. xxi. 7-11.)

Polygamy was practically rare among the Hebrews. If a man took a second wife, the rights of the first remained unimpaired. (Ex. xxi. 10.)

The duty of avenging a man's death fell upon his nearest kinsman. No wilful murderer could escape. Places of sanctuary were promised for those who were guilty of accidental or unpremeditated homicide. (Ex. xxi. 12-14.)

- (3) The laws of property are very simple and presuppose an agricultural community.

The great principle that underlay the laws of the Covenant was this:—That the legislation of Moses is chiefly distinguished by the spirit of mercy and forbearance which permeated it. *If thou meet thine*

**Principle of
the Covenant
legislation.**

enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. (Ex. xxiii. 4.) Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Ex. xxiii. 9.)

The Tabernacle. Moses also received on Mount Sinai full directions for the erection of a Tabernacle in which all acts of worship to Jehovah should be performed. And we are also told that the law-giver spent forty days on the mountain in communion with God. But in the absence of Moses the people waxed impatient, and demanded of Aaron that he should make a visible symbol of their God to go before them: *for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* (Ex. xxxii. 1.)

The Golden Calf. Aaron shewed no reluctance in obeying the request of the people, and ordered them to give up the golden earrings which they wore, in order that he might make an image of a calf. He then said, *These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.* (Ex. xxxii. 4.) A solemn feast to Jehovah was proclaimed; an Altar was built; burnt offerings were offered, and peace offerings brought. *And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* (Ex. xxxii. 6.)

Moses and the Golden Calf. Jehovah Himself informed Moses of the apostasy of Israel. When he left the Divine Presence, with the two tables of the testimony, written by the finger of God, he and Joshua, his companion, heard the noise of the people as they shouted, and Joshua said, *There is a noise of war in the camp.* Moses answered, *It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the*

noise of them that sing do I hear. (Ex. xxxii. 17, 18.) As he came nearer and saw the people dancing round the calf, Moses in his anger *cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.* Directly he came to the people, Moses had the calf burnt and ground to powder, which he mixed with water, and forced its worshippers to drink. For so great a sin against Jehovah vengeance had to be taken, so he cried, *Who is on the Lord's side?* His own tribe of Levi rallied to his call, and slew no less than three thousand of them. Moses again sought pardon from God: and from henceforth Jehovah said that His Angel should guide Israel through the desert to their promised home, but He would not accompany them Himself. In token of penitence the people *stripped themselves of their ornaments by the Mount Horeb.* (Ex. xxxiii. 6.)

The Tent of Meeting. Moses did not ascend the mountain after this, but was allowed to commune with Jehovah in the 'Tent of Meeting', which he used to pitch without the camp before the Tabernacle was made. When Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the Tent. *And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.* Joshua, we are told, *departed not out of the Tent.* (Ex. xxxiii. 7-11.)

Moses' vision Two petitions were now made by **of Jehovah.** Moses to Jehovah:

- (1) That Jehovah would accompany the march of Israel in spite of their sin in the matter of the calf. To this the answer was given: *My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.* (Ex. xxxiii. 14.)
- (2) That the Lord would shew Moses His glory. To this request Jehovah replied: *No man shall see Me and live.* (Ex. xxxiii. 20.) But

He consented to put Moses into a cleft in the rock, and to cover him with His Hand, whilst He passed by and proclaimed the NAME of JEHOVAH. (Ex. xxxiv. 5-7.)

This vision was seen on Mount Sinai, when Moses presented the new tables of stone which he had been ordered to make, and Jehovah inscribed on them His commandments. The broken covenant was renewed, and Moses remained in the Divine Presence forty days and forty nights.

When the Israelites were about to leave Sinai, Moses commanded his brother-in-law, Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, to become their guide, in the words, *Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what good soever the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.* In this way the permanent alliance between Israel and the Kenites was made. (Num. x. 29-32.)

The Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah had also its share in guiding the people, preceding them three days to seek out a resting place. When the Ark was removed, *Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.* (Num. x. 35, 36. Psalm lxviii. 1.)

SUMMARY.

- (1.) In the third month the people encamped before Sinai and prepared for the appearance of God's Presence among them.
- (2.) The Ten Commandments (the Ten Words) were spoken by God Himself, and then the Israelites begged that the rest of the Law might be spoken to Moses.

- (3.) Moses then entered *the thick darkness* and received the earliest legislation, which, from its solemn inauguration with the sprinkling of blood, is called *The Book of the Covenant*. (Ex. xxiv. 7.)
- (4.) Instructions were given for the making of the Tabernacle.
- (5.) The Law of the Sabbath was renewed, and Moses was given *the two tables of testimony written with the finger of God*. (Ex. xxxi. 18.)
- (6.) Aaron made the golden calf, which the people were worshipping as Moses with Joshua was descending the mountain.
- (7.) The tribe of Levi took vengeance on the people.
- (8.) God again talked with Moses, who asked to see His glory.
- (9.) Moses made two new tables.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM SINAI TO THE DEATH OF MOSES.

Numbers I.—XXXVI.

March to Kadesh.

With the departure from Sinai the second stage in the story of the Exodus is entered upon. Israel had been brought to the mountain to receive the Law, and now was at liberty to conquer a home; but events proved that further discipline was needed before a fugitive horde of Egyptian slaves could become a victorious nation.

Before they reached their first halting place they murmured at TABERAH (burning), and as a punishment fire consumed part of their camp. (Num. xi. 1-3.)

When, owing to the complaints of the mixed multitude (Num. xi. 4-6), Moses found that the task of governing the people was too hard for him, Jehovah told him to summon seventy elders before the Tent of Meeting, to whom He would give a spirit of wisdom. On the elders presenting themselves, the cloud came down on the Tent, the spirit of Jehovah was poured out upon them and they prophesied. Two of their number, named Eldad and Medad, had not gone to the Tent, but they also prophesied. This was told to Moses, and Joshua his minister said, *My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said, Art thou jealous for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them.* (Num. xi. 11-29.)

God then sent quails to the people, but no sooner was the flesh between their teeth than a plague smote them;

and the place was called Kibroth-hataavah (The graves of lust). (Num. xi. 30-34.)

**Miriam
smitten.**

At HAZEROTH, Miriam was smitten with leprosy because she and Aaron spoke against the Cushite woman whom Moses had married, and questioned his claim to be the sole mouth-piece of God to the people. (Num. xii.) She was healed at Moses' intercession, but she had to remain outside the camp for seven days, nor did the people leave Hazeroth till she had been re-admitted.

The Spies.

The Israelites next came to KADESH in the wilderness of Paran, from whence the first attempt to win a home for Israel had to be made. Here a representative of each of the twelve tribes was sent out, to spy out the land. They seem to have gone no farther north than Hebron, and to have returned to Kadesh, bringing with them from the valley of Eshcol so large a cluster of grapes that it took two men to carry it. They brought back an evil report of the land, as they said that the cities were fenced and very great, and the natives appeared to be of great stature and strength. (Num. xiii.)

Caleb, the representative of the tribe of Judah, was the exception. He together with Joshua reported favourably. As a reward they were promised to enter and inherit the Land whereunto they went.

The people, discouraged by the spies, murmured, and wished to go back to Egypt. For their lack of trust they were condemned to wander forty years in the desert. (Num. xiv. 34.) In spite of this they tried to break through, but were defeated in the mountains by the Amalekites and Canaanites, who chased them *from Seir to Hormah*.

**Forty years
Wanderings.**

Excluded from the promised land, Israel had now to spend forty years in wandering through the desert. Of this long period hardly anything is recorded. All that is said

about it in Moses' last address to the people is: *So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there.* (Deut. i. 46.)

Rebellion of Korah and his companions. During this time several rebellions took place, the most important being that of Korah. Numbers xvi. seems to contain three narratives:

- (1) Dathan and Abiram, sons of Reuben, rebelled against the civil authority of Moses, whom they accused of wishing to make himself a prince. For this they and their households were swallowed up.
- (2) Korah and two hundred and fifty princes rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the interests of the people at large as opposed to the monopoly of the tribe of Levi.
- (3) An independent account relates how two hundred and fifty Levites rebelled against Aaron's priestly authority.

After the destruction of Korah and his followers the people murmured against Moses and Aaron: *Ye have killed the people of the Lord.* They were smitten with the plague; but Aaron, at Moses' command, took his censer and made atonement. *And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.*

After this the representative of each tribe was bidden to take a rod, and inscribe his name on it. The rods were laid up in the Tent, and Aaron's rod, for the tribe of Levi, budded and bore almonds, in token that Jehovah had chosen the tribe of Levi to minister to Him. The rod was ordered to be kept in the Ark. (Num. xvii.)

Last March to Canaan.

When the years of wandering were ended Moses led the Israelites upon the last stage of their journey, to the Land of Promise. Their object was the fords of the Jordan. The shortest route lay through the territories of Edom

and Moab. Edom at this time was held by a warlike race, well able to protect their country from invasion, and the Edomites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their land. (Num. xx. 14-21.)

Death of Aaron. While the people were waiting for the reply of the Edomites, at Mount Hor, near the great fortress of Petra, Moses, by Jehovah's command, took Aaron and his son Eleazar up the mountain, and after Eleazar had been invested with the insignia of the Priesthood, Aaron died there on the top of the mount, and was mourned by Israel thirty days. (Num. xx. 24-29.)

The Brazen Serpent. At this time Arad, the Canaanite king, attacked the Israelites and took some prisoners, and the king of Edom presented such a threatening front that the only way open to Israel was to turn southward by the eastern border of Edom. The journey was a terrible one, and as usual the people murmured against Moses. They were punished by fiery serpents, but on their repentance were cured by the sight of the Brazen Serpent, which Moses was ordered by God to erect on a pole in their sight. (Num. xxi. 1-9.)

Finally, after encamping at several stopping places, the days of wandering were at an end, and the hour of conquest had come.

Sihon defeated. Sihon, king of the Amorites, was defeated, which was the first victory the chosen people had gained since the days of Amalek at Rephidim. Thus they became masters of his territory, and were now able to establish themselves in the plains of Moab, a little to the north of the Dead Sea. (Num. xxi. 21-24.)

Israel encamped in the Plains of Moab. The encampment on the Plains of Moab is of equal importance with those of Mount Sinai and Kadesh. Here God turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing, and from thence the army of Israel advanced

to attack Midian. Here Moses delivered his solemn farewell address to Israel, and in the neighbouring mountain of Nebo the great leader died.

It was in the plains of Moab also that Joshua received his commission to lead Israel across the Jordan to the conquest of the land.

**Bashan
conquered.**

The Israelites began a campaign against Og, the king of Bashan, which ended in his defeat at Edrei. Seventy walled cities were seized by the Israelites, who thus became possessed of Eastern Palestine, from Arnon to the mountain of Hermon.

Og was the last of the giants. Part of his territory was afterwards occupied by Jair, the son of Manasseh, who called the district Havoth-Jair. (Num. xxxii. 41, 42.)

Balaam.

Balak, king of Moab, convinced of the futility of any attempt to defeat the army of Israel in the field, called in a powerful magician named Balaam, who dwelt at Pethor by the Euphrates, requesting him to curse the people.

Envoys were sent to Balaam with the rewards of divination in their hands. At first the prophet was forbidden by God to go. But when the second embassy of Moabitish princes, *more honourable than the first*, arrived, Balaam bade them wait for a night. On this occasion he was permitted to go to Balak, but God warned him, *Only the word which I speak unto thee, that shalt thou do*. On Balaam's journey the Angel of Jehovah withstood him, and as a sign the ass on which the prophet rode was made to speak and rebuke his madness in defying the Divine command.

The king of Moab met Balaam in the city of Kiriath-huzoth, and the next morning led him to the heights of Baal, which overlooked the camps of Israel.

Balaam uttered his first prophecy with the question,

How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? (Num. xxiii. 8-10.)

The second prophecy was delivered at Zophim. This time Balaam addressed Balak in terms of rebuke: *God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. (Num. xxiii. 19-24.)*

Hearing such blessings bestowed on his enemies, Balak cried, *Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.* But Balaam answered that he had already warned him, *All that Jehovah speaketh, that must I do. Blessed be everyone that blesseth thee, and cursed be everyone that curseth thee. (Num. xxiii. 25—xxiv. 9.)*

After uttering his prophecy, Balaam

Baal-Peor. rose up and went and returned to his own place; but the Midianites, at his instigation, led the Israelites astray and induced them to practise the impure rites of Baal of Peor.

Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, executed judgment on an Israelite, by name Zimri, and a Midianitish woman, and for this he was rewarded by the promise of *an everlasting priesthood. (Num. xxv. 13.)*

For seducing the people into so great a sin against Jehovah, Israel undertook a war against the Midianites. Only the female children were spared in this war of vengeance.

Only one more act is recorded of
Inheritance of Moses; the grant of the conquered lands
Reuben and of Sihon and Og to the tribes of Reuben
Gad. and Gad on condition of their sending warriors to help in the conquest of Western Palestine. If they failed, Moses warned them *Be sure your sin will find you out.* It was believed that Moses, before his death, assembled the people in the Plains of Moab and delivered to them as a last charge the discourse contained in the fifth Book of the Penta-

teuch, *the second law*, as the Alexandrian translators term the Book of Deuteronomy.

At the end of the book are two poems attributed to Moses:

- (1) THE SONG, which *he and Hoshea the son of Nun spake in the ears of the people.* (Deut. xxxii.)
- (2) THE BLESSING, *wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.* (Deut. xxxiii.) This 'Blessing' must be compared with the blessing of the tribes by Jacob in Genesis xlix. Unlike Jacob, Moses declares Levi to be the priestly tribe and the teachers of the Law. Simeon is not so much as mentioned. Judah, who occupies so prominent a place in Jacob's blessing, is dismissed with a few words: *Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people.*

The ninetieth Psalm, which is entitled, *A Prayer of Moses, the man of God*, is also ascribed to him.

**Death of
Moses.**

At last, at God's command, the aged leader went up from the plains of Moab unto Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah.

At the beginning of the Wanderings he ascended the Mount of the Law; at the close, he went up Nebo, the Mount of Prophecy, from the summit of which he saw the nation he had so faithfully led, and the Land which the people were to receive from Jehovah. There, in view of the Land which he had sought, but might not enter, Moses died, and was buried *in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor*, the scene of Israel's sin. Of Moses it is said, *no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.* (Deut. xxxiv.)

'Yet There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. (Deut. xxxiv. 10.)

Nor did there, until ONE came who said of the great Lawgiver, *he wrote of Me.* (John v. 46.)

SUMMARY.

The Book of Numbers deals with a definite period extending over about thirty-eight years, from the departure from Sinai to the encampment of Israel on the Plains of Moab, where the wanderings ended.

- (1.) The march from Sinai to Kadesh.
- (2.) The march to Kadesh, and Israel's failure to enter the Promised Land.
 - (a) The people arrived at the wilderness of Paran, where the Cloud which guided them rested.
 - (b) Hobab, the son of Moses' father-in-law, became their guide.
 - (c) At Taberah the people were punished by fire, and at Kibroth-hataavah by plague.
 - (d) Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses.
 - (e) The spies were sent out, and the people were defeated at Hormah.
 - (f) Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses.
- (3.) The passing away of the older generation, and the march from Kadesh to Eastern Palestine.
 - (a) Miriam died at Kadesh, and Moses and Aaron offended God by striking the rock at the Water of Meribah.
 - (b) An embassy was sent to Edom, during which time Aaron died, and the Israelites were defeated by Arad the Canaanite.
 - (c) The people marched to the Red Sea, avoiding the land of Edom. During this hard journey the people were punished for their murmurings by the fiery serpents.
 - (d) They then encamped in the valley of Moab, and defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan.

(4.) Israel in the plains of Moab.

- (a) Here Balaam was invited by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people, but at God's command he blessed them instead. At his instigation the people were seduced into the sin of Baal-Peor, were punished by pestilence, and avenged themselves upon the Midianites.
- (b) The tribes of Reuben and Gad were given an inheritance on the east of Jordan.
- (c) Eleazar the Priest and Joshua were ordered to divide the land.
- (d) Moses died on Mount Pisgah.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

Joshua I.—XXIV.

**Israel in
Eastern
Palestine.**

At the time of the death of Moses, the Israelites were already in possession of Eastern Palestine, but it was necessary for the progress of the nation that the wandering habits of their ancestors should be replaced by the settled life of an agricultural community, by which alone an organized national life could be attained.

Moses, who was reared in the midst of Egyptian civilization, naturally desired his countrymen to know something better than the undisciplined life of the Bedawin Arabs. So successful were his labours, that only the two tribes of Reuben and Gad were satisfied with continuing to lead a pastoral life in Eastern Palestine, although they were ready to help their brethren to settle in the land on the other side of the Jordan.

At the death of Moses the tents of Israel extended from the shores of the Dead Sea to Abel-Shittim, a distance of six miles. It was spring, the season of harvest in Palestine, when the river overflows its banks, and so the inhabitants of Jericho did not fear an invasion from the east. (Josh. iii. 15.)

Joshua.

Moses had been succeeded by Joshua, originally called Hoshea, but Moses had given him the unusual honour of adding the Divine Name to his, Hoshea being changed into Joshua (Jehovah is Salvation). (Num. xiii. 16.) Jesus (*Ἰησοῦς*) is a Grecised form of Joshua. (Heb. iv. 8, A.V.)

**The Spies sent
to Jericho.**

Joshua sent two spies to Jericho to obtain information. They lodged in the house of Rahab, who protected them and aided them to escape. For this they swore to save her and her relatives, when the city was taken. Rahab's family was incorporated in the tribe of Judah; and she was an ancestress of our Lord. (Matth. i. 5.)

**Joshua crosses
the Jordan.**

Joshua took his army about six miles from Shittim to the Jordan, and remained encamped on the brink of the river for three days before the order was given to cross. After this, as soon as the feet of the priests bearing the Ark touched the water, the stream was stayed at Adam, a place about seventeen miles north of Jericho, and then all the people passed over on dry ground. Twelve stones were brought over by representatives of the twelve tribes, and set up where the Israelites encamped that night, to be a perpetual memorial of the event. (Josh. iii., iv.)

Camp at Gilgal.

The first camp after crossing Jordan was called Gilgal, because all who had been born in the desert were there circumcised, and Jehovah said, *This day have I rolled away (gallothi) the reproach of Egypt from off you.* (Josh. v. 9.)

Here also

- (a) The Passover was kept, and
- (b) The Israelites began to eat the corn of the land, as the manna had ceased. (Josh. v. 10-12.)
- (c) A solemn vow to consecrate everything taken at Jericho to Jehovah was probably made here.

Joshua's vision.

A vision prepared Joshua for his enterprise against Jericho. He saw a Man standing with a drawn sword in his hand, and asked him, *Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?* The answer was, *Nay, but as Captain of the HOST OF THE LORD am I now come.* Joshua was then commanded to put

off his shoes, for he stood on holy ground. (Josh. v. 13-15.)

**Jericho
destroyed.**

Jericho was now formally invested. *None went out and none came in.*

For six days the Priests bore the Ark round the walls, followed by the army in solemn silence. On the seventh day Joshua commanded all to *Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city.* Then the walls fell down, and the inhabitants were put to the sword, with the exception of Rahab and her family. (Josh. vi.)

A solemn curse was pronounced on the man who should presume to rebuild the city. *With the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.* (Josh. vi. 26.) This was fulfilled in the days of Ahab: *In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub; according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun.* (1 Kings xvi. 34.)

**Israel
repulsed: Ai.**

Ai, a small city near Bethel, was attacked by three thousand Israelites, who were ignominiously beaten. Joshua and the elders were told that the cause of this reverse was that there was a 'devoted' thing in their midst. (Josh. vii. 2-15.) On enquiry being made it was found that Achan, the son of Carmi, of the clan of the Zerahites of the tribe of Judah, had taken some of the spoil and hidden it in his tent. After Joshua had begged him to *give glory to the God of Israel* by confessing his sin, he was led to the valley of Achor (trouble), his plunder was burned, and he and his family were stoned. Ai was again attacked, and captured by means of an ambuscade. (Josh. viii. 10-29.)

**Assembly
at Shechem.**

After the destruction of Ai, Joshua led the Israelites to Shechem, and in accordance with the commands of Jehovah to Moses, built an Altar of unhewn stones and offered sacrifices. On the stones he wrote a copy of the laws of Moses, and after stationing half the people on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Ebal, the blessings and cursings of the Law were recited. (Josh. viii. 30-35.)

**The
Gibeonites.**

The Israelites next made an alliance with the four cities to the south-west of Ai, confederated under the leadership of Gibeon. This treaty was obtained by craft. The envoys pretended to come from a distant land, and appeared in the guise of travellers whose clothes and provisions shewed traces of a long and weary journey. The people rashly pledged themselves by oath to enter into a treaty with the Gibeonites; but when the fraud was discovered, though their lives and cities were spared, they were made slaves to the sanctuary of Jehovah as a punishment for their deceit. (Josh. ix.)

**The Five
Kings.**

The news of the treaty that had been made between the Gibeonites and the Israelites was a signal for war in Southern Canaan. Five Amorite kings attacked the allies of Israel, who at once summoned Joshua to their aid. Joshua, after a hurried night march, fell on the Amorites, who fled from the hills by way of the descent of Beth-horon. The five kings took refuge in the cave of Makkedah, where they were imprisoned until the pursuit was over, and then slain. (Josh. x. 1-27.) It was on this occasion that Joshua prayed, saying: *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon.* (Josh. x. 12-14.) This account of the miracle is given as a poetical narrative in the book of Jashar, which was a collection of songs and ballads about national heroes.

This battle ended Joshua's first campaign, giving the

Israelites possession of the highlands of Central Palestine by making them masters of the path of Beth-horon, which led to the Shephelah or Maritime Plain on the west, and to the roads, formerly commanded by Jericho, leading from the western hills to the Arabah.

Conquest of Judah. From Makkedah the Israelites sacked Libnah, Lachish, and Eglon, and then marched eastward and sacked Hebron and Debir. (Josh. x. 29-43.)

The account, however, in Judges i. 8-21 leads us to infer that the effects of this conquest were not lasting, as the narrative represents the conquest of Canaan by Israel as a slow and gradual process, attained less by the united efforts of the whole nation than by the isolated enterprises of the tribes.

Joshua in Northern Israel. Only one other campaign is recorded as having been undertaken by Joshua when Jabin, king of Hazor in the north, was overthrown in a decisive battle at the Waters of Merom. In this instance the Israelites are said to have shewn far less zeal in destroying the cities of their enemies than in the earlier expeditions. They had evidently come to regard themselves as settlers, and to look upon cities as desirable for future use. (Josh. xi. 1-14.)

The Division of the Land. Only two tribes received their inheritance from Joshua. The house of Judah obtained the territory of the Five Kings; and Caleb, as a reward for having been faithful when he spied out the land forty-five years before, had permission to wrest Hebron from the Anakim.

The powerful house of Joseph, of which Joshua was himself a member, received Central Palestine. Mount Ephraim, as the district was called, became the centre of Israelite life. Here was Shechem, where Joseph was buried; Shiloh, the resting place of the Sanctuary; Timnath-Serah, the inheritance of Joshua; and Gibeah,

the home of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest. (Josh. xix. 49, 50; xxiv. 33 marg.)

**Eastern
Tribes.**

The tribes of Reuben and Gad had asked Moses to give them the district conquered from Sihon, as their flocks were numerous, and they preferred to lead a pastoral life. They shared, however, in the campaign in Western Palestine, and at its conclusion were dismissed by Joshua to their own country.

**The Altar
erected by
Reuben and Gad.**

As soon as they had departed to their inheritance they erected an altar by the Jordan. The part of the nation that occupied the western country, regarding this as an act of apostasy from Jehovah, prepared to march against them, but before doing this they sent an embassy headed by Phinehas the son of Eleazar, asking, *Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord?*

The Eastern tribes earnestly repudiated any such intention, declaring that they had only built the altar in token that they too had a portion in Israel; and to silence the objection that the children of their Western brethren might make by asking, *What have ye to do with Jehovah the God of Israel? for Jehovah hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad*, they added that they had no idea of using the altar for sacrificial purposes: it was to be simply a memorial. This answer satisfied the Western tribes, and the altar was called Ed, *for it is a witness (ed) between us that the Lord is God.* (Josh. xxii.)

**Seven Tribes
given
unconquered
Territory.**

The seven tribes which had received no inheritance were assembled at Shiloh. At Joshua's command, three representatives from each tribe were sent to divide the land into suitable inheritances. On their return Joshua *cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of Jehovah.* (Josh. xviii.—xix.)

**Assembly at
Shechem.**

Before his death, Joshua assembled the people at Shechem and delivered a discourse on the history of the nation, pointing out Jehovah's faithful care of them. He accordingly exhorted the people to put away the false gods, and to worship Him only. *As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.*

Joshua then made a covenant with the people, and established a statute and ordinance for them in Shechem. (Josh. xxiv. 1-25.)

**Death of
Joshua.**

Joshua died at the age of a hundred and ten, and was buried on his own land in Timnath-serah. With him the Mosaic age ended, and the pure worship of antiquity, we are told, only lasted until all his companions were dead. (Josh. xxiv. 29-31.)

SUMMARY.

The Book of Joshua falls into three main divisions:—

(1.) I.—XI. An account of the conquest of Canaan.

- (a) Joshua crossed the Jordan and destroyed Jericho.
- (b) He then tried to seize the highlands of Benjamin, but at first failed owing to the sin of Achan.
- (c) After Ai was taken, Joshua and the people went to Ebal and Gerizim, and read the Law, as Moses had commanded them. (Deut. xxvii.)
- (d) The Gibeonites obtained an alliance by fraud, and were attacked by the five kings: Joshua rescued them, defeated the kings of the South and devastated their land.
- (e) Finally, Joshua took Northern Palestine from Jabin, king of Hazor.

(2.) XII.—XXII. The division of the Land.

(a) Only two tribes were assigned land by Joshua himself, namely Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), so the remaining seven tribes were given unconquered territory by lot.

(b) Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh returned to their lands on the east of Jordan, after they had explained that the altar which they had set up was not intended to be a schismatic act, but as a memorial.

(3.) XXIII.—XXIV. The last discourses of Joshua, and the deaths of himself and Eleazar.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES.

Judges, Ruth.

Period of Transition.

The Book of Judges is an historical survey of a period probably extending over more than three centuries. It was a period of transition from a nomadic existence to that of a settled nation. It was marked by the increase of the tribal as opposed to the national spirit, partly owing to the difficulty of intercommunication because of the character of the territory they occupied, and also to the absence of any strong religious impulse which might tend to weld the tribes together.

They had by this time become an agricultural people, and, like other Semitic nations, believed that every field, well, and tree had its own god or 'Baal', who was entitled to receive certain dues and rites of worship from his human tenants. This made their religion local instead of national, and caused them to identify Jehovah with the Baal of the land. Hence arose the danger of Jehovah being regarded as no more than one of the many local gods.

History of the Tribes.

For the sake of clearness the history of the time may be related as a series of tribal narratives, and arranged geographically.

Eastern tribes.

In Judges, the Trans-Jordanic tribes, Reuben and Gad, do not appear to have had much sympathy with their brethren beyond Jordan.

Instances of this unfriendliness are as follows :

- (1) The refusal of the men of Succoth and Penuel to help Gideon in his pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna, for which he punished them on his return. (Judg. viii. 5-17.)
- (2) The slaughter of the Ephraimites at the fords of Jordan by Jephthah. Every man who could not pronounce the test word 'shibboleth', but betrayed his Ephraimitish origin by saying 'sibboleth', was slain. (Judg. xii. 1-6.)
- (3) The indecision of the Reubenites, which prevented them from joining in the league against Sisera. (Judges v. 15, 16.)

Jephthah.

The only judge raised up in Eastern Palestine was Jephthah, who was a man of illegitimate (*i.e.*, not pure Israelite) birth. He delivered the Gileadites from Ammon, and afterwards fought and defeated the Ephraimites, who had resented what they regarded as an encroachment on their privilege of leadership in Israel.

Jephthah is best known for his tragic vow to Jehovah, made before the war with Ammon, in which he swore that whosoever came forth from the doors of his house to meet him when he returned in peace from the children of Ammon should be Jehovah's, and he would offer him up for a burnt offering. At Mizpah his only daughter came to meet him, to his great grief. He rent his clothes, and said : *Alas, my daughter ! thou hast brought me very low ; . . . for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* She asked only a respite of two months, to depart with her companions to the mountains. On her return, we are told that her father *did with her according to his vow which he had*

vowed. Every year the maidens of Israel celebrated her death. (Judg. xi. 30-40.)

With the permission of Jehovah, Judah
Southern tribes: and Simeon, accompanied by the sons of
 (a) **Judah and** Hobab, went up and fought against Adoni-
Simeon; bezek, a ferocious monarch, under whose
 table seventy kings, deprived of their thumbs and great
 toes, used to be fed with broken meat. His conquerors
 treated him with like barbarity, and he died at Jerusalem,
 acknowledging the justice of his fate: *As I have done,*
so God hath requited me. (Judg. i. 7.)

The city of Hebron was taken by Caleb from the Anakim chiefs, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi; and Caleb promised his daughter Achsah to the man who should take Kiriath-sepher, afterwards called Debir. By the capture of this city of Kiriath-sepher, Othniel the son of Kenaz won her. (Judg. i. 10-15.) He afterwards delivered Israel from the king of Mesopotamia. (Judg. iii. 8-10.)

North of Judah lay the small tribe of
 (b) **Benjamin.** Benjamin. Protected alike by the tribes
 of Joseph and Judah, the Benjamites were distinguished
 by their powerful individuality. From them arose
 the second deliverer of Israel—Ehud, who rescued
 his country from the oppression of Eglon, king of Moab,
 by stabbing him. He then escaped to the highlands of
 Ephraim and sounded the alarm. The people forthwith
 assembled, and seizing the fords of the Jordan, slew ten
 thousand Moabites. (Judg. iii. 12-30.)

The Benjamite
 War. The Benjamite war, related in the later
 chapters of Judges, was caused by the
 refusal of the Benjamites to deliver
 up the murderer of the wife of a Levite. The result
 was that nearly all the tribe was annihilated, with the
 exception of six hundred men who took refuge in
 the Cliff of Rimmon. These survivors were allowed
 to provide themselves with wives by seizing the

maidens as they danced at the vintage festival in Shiloh. (Judg. xix.—xxi.)

**Northern
tribes.**

The tribe of Issachar had little peace in their fertile valley in the plain of Esdraelon. Sisera, the captain of Jabin, king of Hazor, seized Harosheth of the Gentiles on the east of Carmel, and from thence *he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.*

The nation was roused to action by a prophetess named Deborah, who sent to Kedesh-Naphtali, summoning a chieftain named Barak to assemble the northern tribes to Mount Tabor, and from thence to make an attack on Sisera. Barak refused to undertake so great an enterprise unless Deborah went with him; and she agreed to go, after warning him that he would not gain honour by the expedition, for Jehovah would *sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.* (Judg. iv. 9.)

This war was a national undertaking, and was the only occasion on which a large number of tribes acted against a foreign enemy. The only tribes that did not partake in this confederacy were the Israelites who lived in Eastern Palestine, and the tribes of Dan and Asher, who were in no position to answer the call.

Barak's victory was absolutely decisive. Sisera tried to escape to his camp at Harosheth, but finding his retreat cut off he turned southward to a place called Zaanannim, to the tent of Heber the Kenite. There he was met by Jael, Heber's wife, who offered him hospitality; and when he had been lulled to sleep by her deception she either smote him down with the great tent-hammer or drove a peg through his temples as he slept. The result of the victory was that never again did the Canaanites disturb Israel. It was commemorated in one of the finest songs in Hebrew literature, the Song of Deborah. (Judg. v.)

Central tribes: The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim,
Ephraim and who held Central Palestine, for centuries
Manasseh. occupied the first place in Israel. The
(Gideon.) one great deliverer of Israel who sprang
from the house of Joseph was Gideon, the
son of Joash the Abiezrite, of the tribe of Manasseh, who
was called by the Angel of Jehovah while he was thresh-
ing wheat, to deliver his countrymen from the Midianites,
who had oppressed them for seven years. He built an
Altar in the place where the Angel had called him, which
he named Jehovah-shalom (Jehovah is peace). That
night he cut down the grove and destroyed the altar of
Baal. This he did under cover of darkness, and his father
was ordered to bring forth his son to be punished for sacri-
lege. He replied, *Let Baal plead* (Jerub-baal). So
Gideon was known as Jerub-baal. The Spirit of God
then descended upon him, and he assembled first of all
his own clan of Abiezer and the tribes of Manasseh,
Asher, Zebulon and Naphtali. After receiving the
signs from God of the fleece dry when the ground was
wet, and wet when the ground was dry, he was told to
put his army of thirty-two thousand to a two-fold trial.
The first was that all those who feared were ordered to
depart, which reduced his host to ten thousand men; and
the second was that only those who, when taken to the
spring of Harod, drank by putting their hands to their
mouths, were allowed to remain, which left Gideon with
only three hundred men.

Gideon then ordered the three hundred men to
approach the enemy's camp at night with torches
concealed in pitchers, and to throw the Midianites
into confusion by suddenly breaking their pitchers and
shewing their lights. Gideon himself, with his servant
Purah, had previously gone down to the Midianites'
camp and heard a soldier telling his companion
how he had dreamed of a barley cake that upset

his tent. The friend replied: *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash: into his hand the Lord will deliver Midian and all his host.* Gideon, thus encouraged, gave the words of the interpreter's dream as the watchword for the night—*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*

The Midianites, hearing the shouts of the Israelites, and suspecting treason in their own camp, began to fight with one another and to flee in confusion. Then the tribes of Naphtali and Asher and Manasseh joined in the pursuit; and when the fugitives reached the fords of the Jordan they found that the men of Ephraim had been warned to intercept their passage. Their two chiefs, Oreb and Zeeb, were slain by the Ephraimites.

Here Gideon turned aside the jealous wrath of Ephraim by his modest reply to their reproaches at not having called them to the battle. *Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?* (Judg. vii. ; viii. 1-3.)

He then pursued the rest of the Midianites and their kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, threatening vengeance on the men of Succoth and Penuel for their refusal to aid him, a threat which he carried out on his return. He surprised the Midianite army, and slew the two kings, because they had murdered his brothers. He refused the crown offered him by the grateful Israelites, but asked for the ear-rings of the Midianites, with which he made an ephod or image, and established a sanctuary at Ophrah. He lived in some state, and had a large harem and many sons. A concubine bore him a son named Abimelech, who was destined to prove the ruin of his family. (Judg. viii. 4-32.)

Abimelech.

After the death of Gideon, Israel *went a-whoring after the Baalim and made Baal-berith their god.* The worship of Baal-berith (The Lord of the Covenant) probably means that the

Israelites and Canaanites of Shechem and the neighbourhood formed a confederacy under the protection of a deity, who may possibly have been regarded as Jehovah Himself.

The mother of Abimelech was probably of Canaanitish birth. The Shechemites, at Abimelech's suggestion, gave him the whole support of their confederacy, and supplied him with money taken out of the temple of their covenant. Abimelech hired a gang of ruffians and put sixty-nine of his brothers to death; only one of them, Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, escaped. The Shechemites anointed Abimelech king *by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem.* (Judg. ix. 1-6.)

**Jotham's
Parable.**

When Jotham learned what had happened, he took his stand on Mount Gerizim, from whence he spoke a parable or fable. The trees, he said, wanted a king, so they invited the most valued of their number to undertake the office. The olive, the fig tree, and the vine all declined to leave their useful function of bearing fruit to wave themselves over the other trees. When, however, the bramble was asked, he agreed with alacrity, saying, *Come, and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.* The meaning of the fable is that worthy men cannot afford to leave their work for the unprofitable office of a ruler, which the worst of men, like Abimelech, eagerly grasp at. (Judg. ix. 7-21.)

The men of Shechem soon became tired of Abimelech, and during the annual vintage festival they openly renounced their allegiance. Gaal, the son of Ebed, was their leader; but Abimelech crushed the revolt, took Shechem and burned a thousand Shechemites alive. He, however, was killed at Thebez, a town north of Shechem, where he was smitten by a millstone which a woman on the wall threw on his head. (Judg. ix. 23-57.)

The Philistines. The Philistines, the most formidable foe to Israel, probably arrived in Canaan from the Egyptian Delta in the days of the Judges. They settled in the great plain on the coast, but soon gave their name—Palestine—to the whole country. Their five chief cities were Gath, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, and Ashkelon. They differed from the other foes of Israel in the following respects:—

- (1) Unlike the Hebrews and their kindred, they did not adopt the practice of circumcision.
- (2) Whereas other invaders had come to plunder, the Philistines came to stay and rule.

The Danites: The Danites, at the time of the birth of their great hero, had been driven by **Samson.** the Philistines from the coast to the upper part of the Valley of Sorek. The wife of a Danite named Manoah, belonging to the town of Zorah, was warned by a Divine Messenger that she was destined to bear a son who was to be dedicated to Jehovah as a Nazirite from the womb, in token of which his mother was commanded to abstain from wine and strong drink, and to observe the laws of ceremonial purity with unusual care. When the child was born he received the name of Samson, and as he grew up he shewed clearly that he was moved by the spirit of Jehovah. (Judg. xiii.)

Some of his exploits. (1) On his way to visit his Philistine bride at Timnah a lion attacked him, which he rent as a man would rend a kid. On his return he found honey in its carcase; so when the day of his marriage feast arrived he propounded this riddle:—

Out of the eater came forth meat,

Out of the strong came forth sweetness,

making a wager of thirty linen garments and changes of raiment that none of his thirty companions would guess

it. They however threatened to burn the bride in her house if she could not extract the secret from her husband. On the last day of the feast Samson's friends asked him,

What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?

Samson replied in a rude rhyme, which may be rendered,

Had ye ploughed not with my cow,

My riddle had perplexed you now.

(2) He then left his bride, made a journey of two days to Ashkelon, smote thirty Philistines, and paid his wager with their garments. (Judg. xiv.)

(3) Because his father-in-law gave his wife to another, Samson drove three hundred foxes, with a firebrand tied between the tails of each pair, into the Philistines' corn.

(4) Because the men of Timnah burnt his wife and father-in-law, Samson attacked them and *smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter*, and then retired to the Cliff of Etam. (Judg. xv. 1-8.)

(5) Three thousand men came to take him, and bound him with new ropes. He burst the ropes and slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass at Ramath-Lehi (the height of the jawbone). At his prayer God clave the hollow place in Lehi, and water gushed out. Hence the name of the well was called En-Hakkore (the well of him that called).

(6) When Samson was encompassed by the Philistines in Gaza he bore the gates of the city to Hebron, some twelve miles away. (Judg. xvi. 1-3.)

(7) He was ruined by the wiles of Delilah, to whom he revealed the secret of his strength, namely his long hair. He was captured by his foes, who put out his eyes. When his hair began to grow again his wondrous strength returned once more; and he was led into the temple of Dagon to make sport for his masters. Resting his

hands upon the two pillars on which the house was supported, he prayed for strength, and then bowed himself with all his might. The temple fell: *So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.* (Judg. xvi. 4-31.)

**The Danite
Sanctuary.**

The stories concerning the individual exploits of the great Danite judge are supplemented by the account of how six hundred Danite warriors left the camp of Dan and formed a settlement in the extreme north of Palestine, where they set up a famous sanctuary to Jehovah. Before they set out they sent five representatives of their clan to seek a suitable place. As they passed through the highlands of Ephraim they met a young Levite of Bethlehem whom they knew. He told them he was acting as priest to a man called Micah, who had set up a private sanctuary out of the treasure amassed by his mother. They then went on, and found a peaceful city of the Zidonians, called Laish. On their return they advised their tribesmen to secure so favourable a spot, and on their way north they took the young Levite and Micah's household gods for their sanctuary, which afterwards became famous in the days of the Northern Kingdom.

**Object of
the Author
of the Book of
Judges.**

The object of the Author of the Book of Judges was to shew by stern precept and example the awful consequences of forsaking the true worship of Jehovah. For the strength of Israel rapidly waned; the nation could not look after itself, and so every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

**The story of
Ruth.**

It is a relief to turn away our gaze from the contemplation of those wild days to something more peaceful and beautiful in the story of Ruth. Elimelech and his family were driven away by stress of famine from Bethlehem-Judah to Moab. There his two sons Mahlon

and Chilion married, and both he and they died, leaving the widowed Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Both wished to go with the mother of their husbands to her old home, and one of them named Ruth refused to leave her. The two women found a kindly reception at Bethlehem; and Ruth, when she went to the field of Boaz, the kinsman of her husband, who had heard of her fidelity to Naomi, was treated with marked favour and allowed to glean among the maidens of the household.

Knowing that Ruth had a legal right to claim the protection of Boaz, Naomi told her to lay herself at his feet as he slept after the harvest feast. On discovering her, Boaz declared that he would take her to wife if the man who was more closely akin to her husband than he, and might marry her if he chose, should refuse to do so.

Boaz himself took his seat at the city gate, and after inviting the nearest kinsman of Mahlon, Ruth's husband, to sit by him together with ten of the elders, asked him whether he was ready to accept the obligation of continuing Mahlon's line by marrying Ruth, for by this means alone could he redeem the property of the dead man. On his refusal, Boaz formally accepted the duty of acting as next of kin to the dead, and took Ruth to be his wife. The son of this marriage was Obed, the grandfather of David. Thus Ruth the Moabitess became one of the ancestresses of Our Lord.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The account in Judges of the conquest of the Land tells us that it was subdued, not by a general national effort, but by individual tribes, acting sometimes in concert, as Judah and Simeon, but often independently. The idea given is that the conquest was extremely partial, and the former inhabitants were still powerful.

- (2.) The generation that had known Joshua remained faithful to Jehovah, but then Israel forsook Him and served the gods of the Canaanites.
- (3.) Then follows the history of the nation under twelve Judges, six of whom are the subject of special notice: *i.e.*, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

The six minor Judges were—Shamgar, the successor of Ehud; Tola and Jair, who followed Gideon; Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, who succeeded Jephthah.

- (4.) The episode of Abimelech and the Shechemites is then related.
- (5.) Two incidents are recorded at the end of the book, to shew the lawlessness of the times :—
 - (i) The adventures of the Danites, who made a new settlement and took away Micah's ephod.
 - (ii) The outrage at Gibeah and the Benjamitish war.

The story of the Book of Ruth is related in this Chapter, as a contrast to the general lawlessness of the times.

CHAPTER X.

PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING.

I. Samuel I.—XII.

Eli.

After the death of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, the book of Judges makes no mention of the national sanctuary. The Ark of the Covenant appears to have been neglected, and the descendants of Aaron do not appear to have had any influence.

But in I. Samuel we find Israel under the guidance of a priest at Shiloh. The reason possibly is that the Israelites, seeing no hope of deliverance from their Philistine oppressors, had turned for consolation to the Sanctuary of Jehovah, and had found in His priest a wise and upright Judge.

Eli was not even a member of the family of Eleazar and Phinehas, but a descendant of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron. Yet it must have been owing to his influence that the Ark had again become the centre of the religious life of Israel.

**The Sanctuary
at Shiloh.**

Shiloh had been a sanctuary from ancient times.

- (1) The Ark and the Tabernacle were placed there after the Israelites had left Gilgal.
- (2) There Joshua is said to have divided the Land by lot among the tribes. (Josh. xviii., xix.)
- (3) A festival to Jehovah was held there annually. (Judg. xxi. 19.)

**Eli's
Sanctuary.**

The Sanctuary at Shiloh was placed, like a Canaanite sanctuary, on an eminence within the city; and its materials were more durable than those of the ancient Tabernacle. (Jer. vii. 12.) But its arrangements were of the simplest, for the Ark alone is mentioned, with a single lamp burning before it, and the only officials appear to have been Eli, his sons Hophni and Phinehas, and their servant.

Its ceremonies, too, do not seem to have been very elaborate; for the people were wont to come to Shiloh to offer annual sacrifices of peace-offerings, concluding with a meal, part of the victims being reserved by custom for the priests. (1 Sam. i. 3; ii. 12-17.)

Eli's functions. Eli's functions appear to have been twofold, for as judge he must have decided the disputes of the people, and as priest have regulated the conduct of those who came to worship.

Eli's sons. As long as Eli was able to control affairs all seems to have gone well, but when his sons took over his duties the priestly judgeship fell into disrepute. Hophni and Phinehas sinned against the Lord by their greed, and also by their immorality, in spite of their father's protests: *If a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?* But they would not listen to their father, *because the Lord would slay them.* (1 Sam. ii.)

**Birth of
Samuel.**

At this crisis Jehovah raised up a prophet. Elkanah, a native of Ramathaim-Zophim in Mount Ephraim, had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. They came every year to Shiloh to make their offerings to the Lord. On one occasion, his favourite wife, Hannah, who had no children, stayed behind, and prayed to Jehovah, and vowed that if He would give her a son, he should be a Nazirite, dedicated to the service of the Lord all his

life. As she prayed silently, Eli at first mistook her for a drunken woman and rebuked her; but on learning the true cause of her emotion, he dismissed her with his blessing. Her prayer was heard, and she bore a son, whom she named Samuel (Heard of God). As soon as he was weaned, he was brought to Eli, and solemnly dedicated to minister before Jehovah. (1 Sam. i.) His birth was the occasion of a Song, attributed to his mother Hannah, which finds an echo in the *Magnificat* of the Blessed Virgin.

Message to Eli.

Before the child Samuel could enter upon the active work of his life, Eli was twice warned of disaster to Israel and of ruin to himself and his family because of the sins of his two sons. The priesthood was to pass from his family, which was to lie under a curse; and as a sign, Eli was told that both his sons would die on the same day. (1 Sam. ii. 27-36.)

Samuel at Shiloh.

From childhood Samuel seems to have been regarded as priest rather than as an attendant at the sanctuary. He wore the linen ephod of the priesthood, and every year his mother brought a tunic specially made for her son, which only persons of rank appear to have worn. He did not minister to Eli as Joshua did to Moses, but is described as *ministering to the Lord before Eli*. (1 Sam. iii. 1.)

One night, when Samuel was asleep, probably in the very presence of the Ark, he was called by name. Thrice did he run to Eli thinking that he had been summoned by him, and the third time *Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child*. He told Samuel to answer the Voice, *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*. Thus the child learned the doom decreed by Jehovah against His priests. Eli solemnly adjured him to tell him what he had heard, and on learning it exclaimed, *It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good*. (1 Sam. iii. 18.)

The Ark taken. About this time the Israelites appear to have resolved to make an effort against their oppressors. They attacked the Philistine camp at Aphek, but were defeated with a loss of four thousand men. They, however, decided to renew the contest, and to make victory certain fetched the Ark from Shiloh. But it proved no talisman to protect a faithless people, thirty thousand Israelites perished, Hophni and Phinehas were slain, and the Ark of God was taken.

Death of Eli. A single fugitive brought the dreadful news to Shiloh. Eli was by this time ninety-eight years of age and blind. When he heard the sounds of woe, he asked what it meant, and on hearing the tidings that the Ark was taken, he fell from his seat where he was awaiting news, and died, *for he was an old man, and heavy*. The wife of Phinehas gave birth to a son prematurely, calling him with her dying breath Ichabod (no glory), for *the glory is departed from Israel*. (1 Sam. iv.)

The wanderings of the Ark. After the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, it was set up in the house of Dagon, the god of Philistia, in Ashdod, the city nearest the battle-field. But the image of Dagon was twice found thrown from its pedestal, and the second time was broken in pieces. At the same time the men of Ashdod were afflicted with emerods.

In their terror, they sent the Ark to Gath, where pestilence at once broke out. It was then despatched to Ekron, but the men of Ekron would not receive it. The Ark remained in the land of the Philistines for seven months. At the end of that time five golden mice and five models of the boils by which the plague had manifested itself were put in a coffer as an atonement to Jehovah, and the Ark placed in a new cart to which two milch-kine were attached. These kine, lowing as they went, drew the cart to Beth-Shemesh, in time of

harvest, where seventy men were slain for irreverently gazing on the Ark. (1 Sam. v.—vi. 18.)

The men of Beth-Shemesh, therefore, besought the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim to come down and receive the Ark. It rested for many years in the house of Abinadab, whose son Eleazar was appointed to look after it. (1 Sam. vi. 19-21 ; vii. 1.) Here it remained until the time of David.

Effects of the loss of the Ark. By the loss of the Ark an important link with the age of Moses was broken ; the priesthood lost its power, and the Priest made way for the Prophet ; the tribe of Ephraim, within whose borders the national sanctuary had been, lost their influence as leaders of the nation ; and above all, the disaster was the sign of the withdrawal of Jehovah's Presence from Israel.

The rise of Samuel the Prophet. Samuel may well be called, after Moses, the Second Founder of the nation. His chief glory is that the Prophetical Dispensation is traced to him. For he founded the Schools of the Prophets, which continued to provide constant witnesses of Jehovah throughout Israel, drawn from every tribe and every class in the community.

His judgeship was marked by peace and prosperity ; and in the enjoyment of a purer religion and an orderly government, the people entered upon a more vigorous period of national life. Under Samuel the Israelites lived at peace with the Canaanites.

Battle of Ebenezer. Samuel secured the confidence of the people by gaining a victory over the Philistines, although on this occasion his conduct was that of a priest rather than of a general. He assembled the people at Mizpah, and exhorted them to turn to Jehovah. When the Philistines perceived Israel thus assembled together, they marched against them. The people begged Samuel *Cease not to cry*

unto the Lord our God for us. A complete victory was gained by Israel, in memory of which Samuel set up the stone of help (Ebenezer), between Mizpah and Shen. (1 Sam. vii. 5-12.)

The Demand for a King. Samuel had so impressed the people with the desire for a settled government, that when they found that his sons were not likely to walk in his steps, and that the Philistines had again become dangerous, they demanded that he should give them a king. At first he was reluctant to grant them their request, for to him the institution of a human monarchy seemed an act of disloyalty; but when Jehovah assured him that *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me*, Samuel did not hesitate to obey the Divine command to anoint a king. (1 Sam. viii.)

Saul comes to Ramah. The asses of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, strayed, and his son Saul, accompanied by a servant, was sent in search of them. In the course of their search they came to the home of Samuel, in the land of Zuph, and enquired for the 'Seer' that he might tell them where the lost asses were to be found. Samuel himself met them, and on their enquiring for the house of the seer, told them who he was and commanded them to come up to the high place. Samuel now told Saul that the asses were found, but that such things were no longer of importance, as *the desire of all Israel was upon him and upon all his father's house*. At the feast that night, Saul was made the chief guest, and had honours paid him such as were usually only paid to those of priestly rank.

At its close, Saul's bed was made on the roof of Samuel's house, and at dawn he was summoned by the seer and escorted to the city gate. The servant was then told to go on; and when he and Saul were alone, Samuel took the vial of oil which he had prepared, and anointed Saul to be king over Israel. (1 Sam. ix.; x. 1.)

Three Signs.

That Saul might be certain that he had been appointed to this high office three signs were given to him, each with its own proper meaning.

- (1) As he came to the sepulchre of Rachel, the ancestress of the Benjamites, two men would come towards him to tell him that the asses he was in search of were found. In this way his private cares would cease.
- (2) By the oak of Tabor two men on their way to Bethel would meet him, who would present him with two loaves made from the first-fruits, in token of the honour in store for him as God's representative.
- (3) Near a garrison of the Philistines at Gibeah he would meet a band of prophets, when the spirit of Jehovah would spring on him and he would be turned to another man, and would prophesy, in token that he who was before a simple citizen would become the equal of the prophets in spiritual strength and greatness.

Saul was further instructed to go to Gilgal and to wait for Samuel for seven days.

The signs came to him as Samuel had foretold, and when Saul was seen prophesying, the people in wonder said, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* To this the answer was, *And who is their father?* implying that the prophetic office was a call direct from God. (1 Sam. x. 2-13.)

**Saul chosen
King by lot.**

On his return home Saul said nothing about what Samuel had told him, except that the seer had informed him that the asses were found. After this, Samuel assembled the tribes at Mizpah to choose a king by lot. The lot fell upon Saul, who was found concealed among the baggage. When he was brought forth *higher than any of the*

people from his shoulders and upward, Samuel presented him to the people, and they all shouted *God save the king!* (1 Sam. x. 14-34.)

At this time nothing further was done. But apparently the Benjamites were actually being driven out of their territory by the Philistines, and many were taking refuge beyond Jordan, when Samuel anointed Saul. Saul may well have been sent to Gilgal, the ancient camp of Joshua, to rally the fugitives, and from there he may have found supporters among the Eastern Israelites in his campaign against Ammon. For Saul, like Joshua, had to conquer Western Palestine from Gilgal.

The War with Ammon. His opportunity soon came, for Nabal, an Ammonite king, besieged Jabesh-Gilead.

When the inhabitants asked for terms, he said that when they surrendered the place he would put out their right eyes as a reproach to all Israel. The elders of the city then asked for a week's respite, promising to yield on the seventh day if no help appeared. On hearing of their distress, Saul hewed in pieces the oxen with which he was ploughing, and sent them throughout Israel with the message, *Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.* The Israelites obeyed his call, and the Ammonites were so thoroughly beaten that *not two of them were left together.* After this striking victory Saul was firmly established on his throne as king of Israel. (1 Sam. xi.)

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The priestly judgeship of Eli at Shiloh; the birth of Samuel; the utter degradation of the priesthood, and the loss of the Ark. The Philistine yoke was now firmly planted on the neck of Israel; and although Jehovah saved His Ark from the

indignity of remaining in a Philistine city and temple, it was not restored to Israel, but remained in seclusion at Kiriath-jearim.

- (2.) The judgeship of Samuel, and the demand of the people for a king. Samuel exhorted them to repent; and after a solemn national assent, the Philistines were attacked and defeated at Ebenezer. Then followed a period of peace, during which Samuel exercised his office as judge. But as his two sons were corrupt judges, the people demanded a king.
- (3.) The appointment of Saul as king. He was privately anointed by Samuel, designated by Jehovah, and acknowledged by the people. His victory over Nahash, king of Ammon, made his throne secure.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REIGN OF SAUL.

I. Samuel XIII.—XXXI.

Philistine War. The war with the Philistines, waged by Saul, beginning at the camp of Gilgal, and ending with the battle at Ephes-dammim, where David slew Goliath, is his greatest title to fame. From the passes leading from the Jordan valley to the highlands of Benjamin, he, in a few years, carried war into the Philistine country.

The campaign opened with a successful assault by Jonathan on the Philistine garrison at Geba. This victory stirred up an immense army of Philistines, which compelled Saul to retreat to Gilgal with only six hundred faithful warriors.

Owing to the delay of Samuel in coming, Saul offered sacrifice at Gilgal, and for this want of faith he was told by the prophet that the kingdom would not remain in his family.

The war of Michmash. In the meanwhile, Jonathan with his armour-bearer, at Geba, made a successful sortie between two hills called Bozez and Seneh. The two warriors, believing (to quote Jonathan's words) that *there is no restraint of Jehovah to save by many or by few*, attacked so fiercely as totally to discomfit the enemy. From the heights of Gibeah Saul's watchmen saw their enemies' host melting away. Saul promptly went in pursuit of the demoralised Philistines, who fled before him, as the Canaanites centuries earlier had fled before Joshua.

Saul then laid a curse upon anyone who should stop in the pursuit to refresh himself. Jonathan, ignorant of this command, tasted some honey in a wood; and when at the end of the day the oracle was consulted, his action was declared to be the cause of Israel's offence. Saul would have slain him had not the people prevented him, saying, *Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?* (1 Sam. xiv. 45.)

This campaign secured the territory of Benjamin for the Israelites, and in addition caused Saul to be acknowledged king by all the people.

The next time the Philistines came into conflict with Saul was on the borders of their own territory in the neighbourhood of Gath. They were encamped at Ephes-dammim, and the Israelites were entrenched on the eastern side.

A new Israelite warrior was the cause of the victory of Ephes-dammim—David, the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, who slew the Philistine champion, Goliath of Gath.

**David and
Goliath.**

Before the battle a scene occurred which reminds us of similar ones in classical history. The Philistine champion of the day was a native of Gath, whose name Goliath, as well as his gigantic stature, marks him as one of the survivors of the ancient Canaanite dwellers in the Shephelah. In his panoply he stood over nine feet in height; but giant though he was, it was his magnificent armour which attracted most attention. Day by day Goliath challenged the Hebrews to send a man to decide by single combat whether Israel or Philistia should in future be the ruling nation.

**Two Stories
preserved.**

We have at this point two versions of what followed. One is that David the son of Jesse came from feeding his father's flock to visit his brethren, and that the boy, hearing the

boastful Philistine defy the armies of the Living God, offered to fight with him. But the other version, preserved in the Greek Bible, appears more probable, namely, that David was already a chieftain in Saul's army, and as such was accepted by the king as Israel's champion. Such confidence had Saul in his young armour-bearer, that he offered to lend him his own arms; but David must have known that to fight the Philistine upon even terms was to rush upon death. As he had not proved Saul's armour, he preferred to trust to his shepherd's staff and sling, which he had used with such effect to defend his sheep. Above all, he trusted in Jehovah, the God of the armies of Israel. As they faced each other, the two champions indulged in mutual taunts, Goliath vowing by his gods to give David's carcase to the birds and beasts; and David replying, *Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast reproached.* As the Philistine drew near, David's sling-stone smote him in the forehead, and he fell down dead. David immediately struck off his head. The victory gained by Israel on that day was as complete as possible. The Philistines took refuge in Gath and Ekron, and their camp was spoiled by the Israelites.

The appearance of David is a turning-point in the career of Saul. But in the sacred narrative Saul's rival is not introduced until it has been related how the king lost the favour of Samuel.

**Saul's
Character.**

Saul had a noble nature, but in spite of his undoubted merits, there was something which made it impossible for him to accomplish the work of developing the higher civilisation of his people which Samuel expected him to perform. As a king he had to rule his people as well as to save them from their enemies. And this he could not do

without exercising the discipline of self-restraint, a quality in which he was sadly lacking. In addition to his lack of statesmanlike qualities, Saul seems completely to have misapprehended the duties of religion; for while Samuel insisted upon implicit obedience to the living voice of God, Saul had the idea that the essence of religion was the performance of ritual observances. This accounts for his rejection, and the choice of another to take his place.

The Amalekites. The war against the Amalekites was the final reason for his rejection from being king. The feud between this people and the Israelites was of long standing, in fact ever since the days of The Wanderings, and had continued throughout the time of the Judges. So Samuel proclaimed a holy war in the name of Jehovah against those implacable foes. *Go and smite Amalek, and devote (to God for destruction) all that they have, and spare them not.* It was considered the height of profanity to make any profit out of a campaign of this nature; but Saul converted a religious war into a plundering expedition; for he only destroyed what was *vile and refuse*, and kept the best of the spoil, and carried with him Agag, the king of Amalek, to grace his triumph.

Warned by Jehovah, Samuel presented himself before Saul, and, hearing no excuse, sternly rebuked him in the words, *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.* Saul was now full of penitence; he clung to Samuel's robe and rent it. *The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee*, said the stern prophet, *and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.* Before he left Saul's presence, Samuel slew Agag in

the presence of Jehovah, as a victim devoted to death by Divine decree. (1 Sam. xv.) Samuel saw Saul no more, but mourned for him bitterly.

Samuel, by God's command, next went to Bethlehem and anointed David, the youngest son of Jesse, as Saul's successor, after being warned that *man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*. (1 Sam. xvi. 1-13.)

After the slaying of Goliath, David was Saul's jealousy of David. made the constant companion of Saul; and he and Jonathan became sworn friends. But as the women of Israel sang the praises of David after the slaying of Goliath, and ascribed *tens of thousands* of slain to David and only *thousands* to Saul, Saul began to dread him as a possible rival. As time went on the very sight of his servant became unendurable to the king, who removed David from his court by appointing him captain over a thousand men.

When David was thus no longer in the royal presence, his popularity increased, and he found favour in the eyes of Michal, Saul's daughter. Saul, hoping to entrap David, sent courtiers to suggest that he should become his son-in-law, and that he should pay the dowry by slaying a hundred Philistines. David disappointed Saul's hope that his rashness would lead him to his death, and provided the dowry required.

But Saul so dreaded David's growing influence that he tried to persuade Jonathan and his courtiers to kill him. But Jonathan pleaded for his friend, and for a time Saul was reconciled to David. But in the next war David distinguished himself as usual, and Saul's jealousy revived. Whilst David was playing, as was his wont, before Saul, the king suddenly brandished his spear at him, and David only just escaped. When he arrived at his house, he heard that Saul had sent men to kill him, and induced his wife, Michal, to put the household god

(or teraphim) into his bed in order to deceive his pursuers. When the fraud was discovered Michal only escaped by declaring to her father that David would have slain her had she refused to help him. (1 Sam. xviii. ; xix. 1-17.)

David then joined Samuel and his prophetic company at Ramah, and the three bands of men sent to take him prophesied on beholding Samuel and his companions. When Saul came to the place, he, like his soldiers, experienced the prophetic ecstasy. For a day and a night he fell down naked, and prophesied in the presence of Samuel, so that men again asked, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* (1 Sam. xix. 19-24. See also 1 Sam. x. 12.)

**David and
Jonathan.**

The character of Jonathan reveals itself in the interview he had with his friend before David finally resolved to escape from Saul.

It was agreed between the two friends that on the morrow David should absent himself from the royal table, where he, Abner and Jonathan were daily accustomed to dine. If Saul should ask the reason for his non-appearance, Jonathan would say that David had requested leave to attend a family sacrifice at Bethlehem on the feast of the new moon. If Saul took this excuse in good part, it would be sufficient proof that his previous outbursts of wrath had no serious meaning. Otherwise David would have to take precautions for his safety.

Jonathan agreed to meet David in the open country three days later ; and he was to remain hidden behind the cairn, where he had concealed himself on the occasion of his first rupture with Saul. In view of the danger of communicating by word of mouth, Jonathan was to go forth as though to practise himself in archery. As he shot the arrows, and his attendant ran to pick them up, he would, if all was well, shout to him to bring them back. If, however, he told the boy that the arrows

were beyond him, David would know that Saul's purpose towards him was evil.

On the first day Saul attributed David's absence to ceremonial uncleanness. On the second he asked Jonathan the reason, and, on hearing that David had requested permission to go to Bethlehem, broke forth into violent reproaches. In siding with David, Jonathan, Saul declared, was injuring himself; since as long as David lived the dynasty was in peril. Calling Jonathan *the child of a runaway slave* (1 Sam. xx. 30, Sept.), the infuriated king hurled his spear at his son, and Jonathan left his table in fierce anger, knowing full well that David's doom was sealed, should he fall into his father's hands. (1 Sam. xx. 33, 34.)

**The Massacre
at Nob.**

After visiting Samuel at Ramah, and a final interview with Jonathan, David took refuge with the priests at the sanctuary of Nob, where he persuaded Ahimelech, the high priest, to give him the sword of Goliath, and the shewbread. Saul's chief herdsman, Doeg the Edomite, witnessed the transaction and told his master. The king would not listen to Ahimelech's excuses and condemned all the priests at Nob to death. As his servants would not do this, Doeg had no scruple in performing the deed. Eighty-five priests were killed, and the city of Nob was put to the sword. Only Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped to David. (1 Sam. xxi. 1-9; xxii. 6-20.)

David then went to Achish, king of Gath, where he would have been put to death, had he not feigned madness and so escaped.

At the cave of Adullam he was joined by his family, and also by those who were in debt, or discontented with Saul's rule. He was soon at the head of four hundred warriors, and thus became a powerful outlaw. He first went to Mizpeh of Moab, but by the advice of the prophet Gad he returned to Judah, and after committing

his father and mother to the care of the Moabite king, he went next to the forest of Hareth, and thence went to the rescue of Keilah from the Philistines, a city in the south of Judah. It was here that he was joined by Abiathar, who brought the priestly ephod. By this time his force was six hundred strong. (1 Sam. xxii. 1-5, xxiii. 1-5.)

As David distrusted the fidelity of the men of Keilah, for Saul had appeared in the south of Judah at the head of an army, he abandoned the city and took refuge in the wilderness of Ziph, south of Hebron. Here he was betrayed to Saul by the Ziphites, and would have been captured had not the king been recalled by the news of a Philistine invasion. The place where he so narrowly escaped capture was called Sela-Hammahlekoth (the Cliff of Divisions). (1 Sam. xxiii. 28.)

**David spares
Saul.**

He then took refuge in the cliffs of Engedi, on the shores of the Dead Sea.

The place is well suited to be the home of outlaws, abounding as it does in caverns where they can remain securely hidden. Here Saul incautiously placed himself in David's power, and owed his life to the generous forbearance of his rival. But Saul and David were not reconciled; and the rest of the outlaw's progress is marked by his steady growth in power and influence. (1 Sam. xxiv.) About this time Samuel died. A remarkable episode in David's career led to his becoming one of the great landowners in the south of Judah.

**David and
Nabal.**

David supported his force of six hundred men by levying what was formerly known in Scotland as 'blackmail'. He protected

the principal landowners from all marauders, and exacted payment for his services. A certain noble, representing the great house of Caleb, refused to give David anything for guarding his flocks during the sheep-shearing, though he had been approached in the most courteous manner.

David having resolved to punish this churlish behaviour, ordered his men to gird on their swords, vowing he would not spare a man of Nabal's household. Fortunately, however, Nabal's wife, Abigail, heard what had happened, and went herself to meet David with an offering. She admitted to David that Nabal was rightly named—*Fool (Nabal) is his name, and folly is with him.* David accepted her present, at the same time thanking her for saving him from blood-guiltiness. Nabal died on hearing what had happened, and David married his widow. By this means he became a man of wealth and importance in southern Palestine. Knowing that the breach with Saul was irreparable, David went to Gath for the second time as an ally of Achish, and settled in Ziklag, where he remained till Saul's death. (1 Sam. xxv.)

The end of the life of Saul. The Philistines at this time decided to attack Israel in the plain of Esdraelon, and assembled at Aphek, which fact alone shews that Saul had cleared the whole of Mount Ephraim of the Philistines. Whilst the Israelite army lay near the mountain in Jezreel, David was present with the Philistines, but as he was an object of suspicion to their princes, they insisted on his being sent back to Ziklag. (1 Sam. xxix.)

The Witch of Endor. Saul had been bereft for a long time of all guidance from Jehovah. In his former zeal for the worship of Jehovah, he had made the practice of divination a capital offence. But in his last extremity he consulted a woman who lived at Endor, fully twelve miles from mount Gilboa, who was believed to have a familiar spirit. He disguised himself and took only two companions, and demanded of the woman to bring up Samuel. When the woman saw the prophet she knew that her guest was Saul himself. On being asked what she saw, she said, *I see gods coming out of the earth.* Saul inquired, *What form*

is he of? She said, *An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance.* In this way he learned that defeat was in store for him. *To-morrow, said the vision, shalt thou and thy sons be with me.* Saul, on hearing his doom, fell his whole length on the ground and lay there insensible for a whole day. The woman made him take refreshment, killed a calf and prepared it for him; and Saul, having taken nourishment, returned to the camp. (1 Sam. xxviii.)

Battle of Mount Gilboa. The position taken by Israel on Mount Gilboa was well chosen, as it commanded both the valley of Jezreel, the trade route to Damascus, and the passage of the Jordan. The Philistine army succeeded in carrying the hill, and completely routed its defenders. Three sons of Saul were killed, and Saul himself, hard pressed by the Philistine archers, ordered his armour-bearer to slay him; and when this was refused he fell upon his own sword and died, as did his companion.

The ruin of Israel seemed to be complete, for the very cities were abandoned to the Philistine conquerors. The armour of Saul was borne in triumph round the cities of the Philistines. His head was placed in the temple of Dagon, and his body, and those of his sons, fastened to the walls of the Canaanite town of Bethshan. (1 Sam. xxxi.)

The men of Jabesh-Gilead. One deed of heroism relieves the darkness of the scene. The men of Jabesh-Gilead had not forgotten their deliverer, for no sooner did they hear that Saul had been defeated, than they went by night to Bethshan and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the city walls. These they burned, and buried the bones under a well-known tamarisk, fasting for seven days in honour of the dead. (1 Sam. xxxi. 11-13.)

The death of Saul is one of the saddest events in the history of Israel, and it is no easy task to account for the complete failure of his life. Yet even in the hour of his defeat the memory of his noble qualities moved David to join his name with that of his stainless son, and so declare that *both were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.*

Darkness hides from us the last tragic scene. We know not whether Saul fell by his own hand, or by that of a man of the 'devoted' race of Amalek, in sparing which the king had sinned. (1 Sam. xxxi. 4; 2 Sam. i. 9, 10.) The vast but somewhat shadowy figure passes from the eyes of men, a solemn warning that no virtue can compensate for that self-discipline by which a man is qualified to become a leader among his fellows.

SUMMARY.

SAUL'S CAMPAIGNS.

- (1.) Jabesh-Gilead. Soon after he was appointed king, he rescued the men of Jabesh-Gilead from Nahash, the king of Ammon, and earned their lasting gratitude.
- (2.) Saul's greatest achievement was the long war he waged with the Philistines, beginning at the camp at Gilgal, and ending with the battle at Ephesdammim, where David slew Goliath. At the commencement of his reign Saul was fighting to conquer the passes leading from the Jordan valley to the highlands of Benjamin, but in the course of a few years he was able to carry the war into the Philistine country. In this campaign his impulsive character made him make two great mistakes.

- (i) He offended Samuel by not waiting for him at Gilgal, and so was told the kingdom would not remain in his family; and
 - (ii) He robbed himself of the fruits of victory at Michmash by his rash curse on anyone who should taste food during that day; a curse to which Jonathan nearly fell an innocent victim.
- (3.) The war with the Amalekites. This was a holy war proclaimed by Samuel. Everything was to be destroyed. Saul was rejected from being king, for having spared the best of the spoil and Agag the king.
- (4.) The final campaign against the Philistines. Owing to the civil war between Saul and David, the Philistines regained some of their old ascendancy. Saul gave them battle at Mount Gilboa; his army was defeated, and he with his three sons were slain.

SAUL AND SAMUEL.

Saul's conduct in offering sacrifice at Gilgal when he thought Samuel was not coming, and in sparing the spoil of the Amalekites for a great sacrifice to Jehovah, led to his rejection and the loss of the Prophet's friendship.

DAVID.

- (1.) Anointed privately as king at Bethlehem.
- (2.) Plays before Saul and becomes his armour-bearer.
- (3.) Slays Goliath.
- (4.) Becomes a favourite of Saul, but incurs his jealousy.
- (5.) Wins Michal, Saul's daughter, as his wife.
- (6.) His friendship with Jonathan.

(7.) Escapes from Saul—

- (a) To Ramah ;
- (b) To Nob, where the priests are slain ;
- (c) To Achish ;
- (d) The cave of Adullam ;
- (e) In the wilderness of Judah at Keilah, Ziph,
and Engedi, where he spares Saul's life ;
- (f) Marries Abigail ;
- (g) Becomes an ally of Achish, king of Gath,
at Ziklag, till Saul's death.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REIGN OF DAVID:

HIS PROSPERITY.

II. Samuel i.—xi.

Results of the battle of Mount Gilboa.

It is not easy to determine the precise results of the Philistine victory over Israel upon Mount Gilboa, but it has been generally assumed that it was so decisive as to make the conquerors masters of Central as well as of Southern Palestine. For a time the Israelites are supposed to have become vassals to the 'uncircumcised', and to have purchased peace by the payment of tribute.

One fact alone may be regarded as certain, namely, that whatever unity had existed in the days of Saul was destroyed at Gilboa, and Israel was for a time divided into rival and even hostile monarchies.

The Kingdom of Ishbosheth.

After the battle of Mount Gilboa, Abner, who had escaped the slaughter, rallied the scattered remnant of the army at Mahanaim, where he proclaimed Ishbosheth (or Eshbaal), son of Saul, king over Israel. But Ishbosheth seems to have inherited none of the great qualities of his father, and only to have reigned by the help of Abner. The sacred narrative tells us that Abner first made him king in Eastern Palestine *over Gilead, and over the Ashurites*, and then, crossing the Jordan, asserted his authority *over Jezreel, and over Ephraim*,

and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. (2 Sam. ii. 8-9.) The seat of the kingdom remained, however, at Mahanaim.

**Sack of
Ziklag.**

David had left the army of Achish in the Plain of Esdraelon and returned to Ziklag. But when he got there he found that the town had been sacked by the Amalekites, and his own wives, Abigail and Ahinoam, together with the wives and children of his men, taken captive. So great was the indignation of David's soldiers at their homes having been thus devastated, that they threatened to stone him. David's trust in Jehovah did not fail him even then; for he summoned Abiathar the priest, and enquired of God whether a pursuit would result in the recovery of the spoils. The reply was favourable, and he advanced so rapidly that two hundred of his men were worn out when they reached the brook Besor. Leaving them there to guard the baggage, David and the four hundred remaining soldiers passed on till they found an Egyptian slave, whom the Amalekites had left to die in the desert. Having learned from him the position of the Amalekites, David attacked them during a feast held in celebration of their success. All the spoil was recovered and much booty besides. Thus David returned to Ziklag with the prestige of victory. He immediately sent rich presents from the spoil to all the cities which had befriended him during the days of his adversity.

**David's
influence.**

The four hundred warriors who had borne the fatigue of the long march and defeated the Amalekites were unwilling to give their comrades who had remained at the brook Besor any share in the booty. But David would not permit such injustice, and made a statute and ordinance that *As his share is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his share be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall share alike.* (1 Sam. xxx. 24.)

**David in
Hebron.**

David was now the chief man in the tribe of Judah, and was able to establish himself at Hebron. Thither the elders of the tribe repaired and anointed him their king, and for seven years this city remained David's capital. The Philistines did not interfere with him, probably because they regarded him as an ally, and also because it was to their interest to encourage the strife between Judah and Israel.

David's policy.

David's policy had been to lay claim to the kingdom over Israel as the legitimate successor of Saul. He had executed the Amalekite who visited him bearing news of the slaying of the king on Mount Gilboa. (2 Sam. i. 15.) He also sent to Jabesh-Gilead to thank the inhabitants for rescuing the bodies of Saul and Jonathan. (2 Sam. ii. 5-7.)

In the same spirit he refused to treat with Abner till Saul's daughter Michal had been restored to him.

It was apparently his purpose to depose Ishbosheth after providing for his maintenance, and to assume the headship over the house of Saul as the husband of Michal. By this means he doubtless hoped to have united all Israel peacefully under his sceptre. But circumstances were too strong for him.

**Strife between
the men of
David and of
Ishbosheth.**

Abner and the men of Ishbosheth went from Mahanaim to the Pool of Gibeon, where they met David's men under Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. These three brothers, sons of Zeruiah and nephews of David, were renowned as warriors, Asahel being famed for his fleetness of foot. Abner suggested to Joab that twelve picked men, chosen from each army, should engage in a mimic contest. But when the champions approached one another they fought so desperately that all were slain, and the place was henceforward known as Helkath-hazzurim. A general engagement followed, in which Abner and his men were

put to flight. Asahel, Joab's brother, pursued Abner, who urged him to pursue some less formidable warrior. He

**Murder of
Abner.**

was slain by Abner, as he persisted in following him. This led to a family blood feud against Abner, whose subsequent murder by Joab when he came to treat with David ruined the king's hopes of a peaceful settlement between the rival kingdoms.

David confessed his own helplessness, saying : *I am this day weak, though anointed king ; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me.* (2 Sam. iii. 38, 39.)

The reason why Abner came to treat **Abner quarrels with David** was because of the folly of **with Ishbosheth.** Ishbosheth, whom he supported on the throne. Saul had left a young wife named Rizpah, and Ishbosheth accused Abner of undue familiarity with her, a charge which was equal to one of treason. Abner therefore came to see David, and was treacherously slain by Joab. David could not punish this outrage, as Joab was able to justify himself by saying he had avenged the death of his brother Asahel. But the king saw that Abner's death had thwarted his scheme, and tried to soothe the ruffled feelings of his people by giving him a splendid funeral, at which he acted as chief mourner. Over Abner he pronounced a dirge, as he had done over Saul and Jonathan : *Died Abner as a fool dieth ? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters.* (2 Sam. iii. 33, 34.)

**Fate of
Ishbosheth.**

No one was now left to protect Ishbosheth. He was murdered by two Gibeonites of the town of Beeroth, named Rechab and Baanah, in revenge for the violation by Saul of the ancient treaty between Israel and Gibeon. As the porteress who kept the door of Ishbosheth's house slept over her task of sifting the wheat, they

slipped past her and slew the king as he slept at midday. (2 Sam. iv. 6.) [According to the Greek version.] They then brought his head to David at Hebron, little suspecting that they would have to pay the penalty of their crime. But David, who always abhorred crimes of treachery and violence, after reminding the murderers of the fate of the messenger of the news of the death of Saul, who instead of receiving the reward that he expected was slain, said: *How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron: but they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.* (2 Sam. iv. 11-12.)

**David king of
Israel.**

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel. (2 Sam. v. 1-3.)

As long as David was king at Hebron his power was not sufficient to excite the suspicions of the Philistines, who do not seem to have raised any objection to his assuming the sovereignty over Israel. As long as the Israelites possessed no strongly fortified towns, whilst the Philistines had at least five large walled cities, the supremacy of the latter was assured.

**Capture of
Zion.**

But David saw an opportunity of reversing the state of affairs. One city of the ancient nation of the Jebusites remained uncaptured alike by Philistine and Hebrew. The stronghold of Zion was deemed impregnable by its occupants, who laughed at the idea of anyone

being able to take it by assault. When David and his little army approached the city, the defenders cried, *The lame and the blind shall keep thee away.* But David encouraged his men by the words: *Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain.* We are told that Joab was the first to enter Zion when it was taken. (2 Sam. v. 4-10; 1 Chron. xi. 4-9.)

**Importance of
Jerusalem.**

The capture of Zion is the turning point in the national history, for it is probably the first time since Joshua that the Israelites ever attacked a fortified place. David had now a strong fortress to which he could retreat, and from which he could contend with Philistia upon equal terms.

**David's
Philistine Wars.**

Of the subsequent wars with the Philistines hardly anything is recorded. Twice it is said that they were defeated in the Valley of Rephaim, south of Jerusalem. On the first occasion the place was known as Baal-perazim, because, said David, *The Lord hath broken forth (paraz) upon mine enemies as the breach (perez) of waters.* David won such a decisive victory that the Philistines abandoned their gods to the conquerors.

At the second battle in the Valley of Rephaim, David enquired of Jehovah, and was told to attack the Philistines in the rear when he heard *the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.* (2 Sam. v. 17-25.)

It is unfortunate that there is so little information about these wars, for they were the most important as well as the most decisive of those waged by David. For after his reign the hated oppressors are hardly mentioned, and were never really formidable. It is

possible that when David became assured of his position as king of Israel he not only conquered but conciliated the Philistines. It must be remembered that he had been their ally, had fought in their army, and had long lived in intimate friendship with them; and as in later days Philistines are found holding high positions in his court and army, the nation may have felt but little shame in becoming his allies, or even in partially acknowledging his suzerainty.

**The Ark
brought to
Zion.**

With the cessation of the war with Philistia, David took a most important step. Now that he had triumphed over his enemies and was secure in the possession of a strong city, he resolved to make it the centre of the restored religion of Israel. To do this it was necessary to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. It had been for many years at Kiriath-jearim for the Philistines had opposed its removal from their jurisdiction, as they believed that with the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence in their midst the armies of Israel would be invincible. Even after this obstacle was removed by their total defeat, David hesitated, possibly for fear of the jealousy of the Ephraimites, in whose territory at Shiloh the Ark had originally been kept. In addition, though Jerusalem had long been a Canaanitish sanctuary, it was quite possible that the Israelites would regard it as a profane spot, and one unlikely to prove acceptable to their God.

In removing the Ark from the house of Abinadab, a sinister omen occurred. The Ark was placed in a new cart driven by Abinadab's sons, Uzzah and Ahio. At the threshing-floor of Nachon, Uzzah put his hand on the Ark to steady it, and was immediately struck dead. David dared not proceed further, and the Ark was brought to the house of Obed-Edom of Gath. As long as his house afforded shelter to the Ark it was clearly seen that

Jehovah favoured Obed-Edom; and after three months David was emboldened to bring it to Jerusalem. At the ceremony of bringing the Ark into the city of David, the king himself officiated as priest. He assumed the ephod, and led the sacred dances in front of the Ark as it was conveyed to the Tent prepared for its reception. Sacrifices of peace-offerings were made; David blessed the people in the Name of Jehovah, and dismissed them with presents. One incident alone marred the joy of the festival, and seems to shew that David's relations with the family of Saul were not satisfactory. For the exuberant manifestation of his joy at the coming of the Ark to his capital, his wife Michal *despised him in her heart*. David deposed her from her position of royal consort, and she *had no child to the day of her death*. (2 Sam. vi.)

David's Foreign Wars. Master of his own territory and secure in the allegiance of his people, David subdued Moab, Edom, Ammon, and their ally Syria. The result of the conquest of Syria gave him possession of Damascus, while the conquest of Edom gave him a harbour on the Red Sea.

Ammon and Syria. The conquest of Ammon was the most difficult of all David's undertakings, and is also important as marking the beginning of his domestic sorrows, as it was, as we shall see later on in the narrative, during this war that David committed the great sin which ruined the rest of his life.

On the death of Nahash the king of Ammon, who had been his friend, David sent an embassy to his son Hanun. The new king was induced to believe that David's intentions to him were not sincere, and treated the ambassadors with the utmost indignity. This meant war. David prepared to cross the Jordan, and the Ammonites made a league with the neighbouring kings

of Syria. A large army was sent to assist the Ammonites by Hadadezer the Syrian king of Zobah and his allies, but it was defeated outside the walls of Rabbah by Joab and Abishai. David then invaded Syria in person, and routed the army of Hadadezer so completely that the Ammonites had no more hope of support from Syria. After this Rabbath-Ammon was invested by the Israelites, and when its fall was inevitable Joab sent for David that he might take the city himself. *Lest, said Joab, I take the city and it be called after my name.* According to the present reading the Ammonites were treated by David with savage cruelty, but a very slight modification of the text will justify the hope that the prisoners were spared and put to work at the royal buildings. (2 Sam. x. and xii. 26-31.)

The Temple. In the peaceful days at the close of his reign, David is said to have made arrangements for the building of the Temple. He had built a palace for himself by the aid of Syrian architects, and so he wished to give the Ark of Jehovah a suitable abode. *See now, said he to the prophet Nathan, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains.*

Nathan seems at first to have approved of the idea, but that night he was charged with a message from Jehovah forbidding him to build a Temple. In reward for his piety, however, he was promised a sure inheritance for his family, and it was hinted that his successor should be allowed to build a house for Jehovah. (2 Sam. vii.) In the books of Chronicles David is said to have devoted his latter days to planning how the Temple should be built, and in instructing his son Solomon how to construct it. He was not allowed, according to the Chronicler, to erect a Temple, because he had *made great wars*, and could be described as *a man of blood*.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) The joint rule of David at Hebron and Ishbosheth son of Saul at Mahanaim. (2 Sam. ii.—iv.)

Israel was divided into two kingdoms constantly at war with one another, the larger part under Ishbosheth and his kinsman, Abner.

David, assisted by Joab, increased in power. Joab commenced a blood feud with Abner, who had slain his brother Asahel in battle.

Abner renounced his allegiance to Ishbosheth, and made terms with David, but was treacherously killed by Joab.

Ishbosheth was murdered, and David became the only king in Israel.

- (2.) The prosperous period of the reign of David.
(2 Sam. v.—x.)

David's first act as king over all Israel was to capture Jerusalem, and to build a palace there with the aid of Hiram king of Tyre.

He conquered the Philistines and restored the Ark to Israel, placing it in his own capital.

He desired to build a Temple, but was forbidden by Jehovah through the prophet Nathan.

He conquered the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Syria.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE REIGN OF DAVID:

HIS ADVERSITY.

II. Samuel XI.—I. Kings II.

David's sin and its punishment. As a soldier David seems to have enjoyed almost uninterrupted success; but as a monarch, especially in his own family, he had but little happiness. Under him Israel passed from the simple life of a peasant people to the comparative civilization and luxury of a conquering race; and neither king nor people were able to adapt themselves to these new conditions without deteriorating in character.

After his successful expedition against Syria, David began to abstain from sharing in the hardships of his army in the field. This was the occasion of his great sin. He saw and loved Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a Hittite soldier in his army. When he found that there was no hope of saving her from the death which her husband had the right to inflict on her if she were proved to be unfaithful to him, he sent Uriah with a letter to Joab containing this command, *Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him that he may be smitten and die.* Joab obeyed the order; an assault was made on Rabbath-Ammon, and Uriah was slain. (2 Sam. xi.)

Nathan. But David did not long enjoy the results of his crime; for God sent Nathan the prophet, who told him the parable of the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb; and when the king

said, *As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die*, Nathan's reply was, *Thou art the man*. He then told him that the sword would never depart from his house; and though he repented, while God put away his sin, He did not revoke His sentence. (2 Sam. xii.)

**David's
troubles.**

David's first sorrow after the sentence passed upon him by God was the death of the child of Bathsheba. While it lay a-dying, David fasted and wept; but when he knew it was dead, he again took food. When his servants asked him the reason for his behaviour, he said, *While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.* (2 Sam. xii. 22-23.)

Amnon's crime. The fatal example set by the father was followed by his eldest son, Amnon. Amnon's treatment of his half-sister Tamar is a terrible example of the degraded sensuality of an Oriental court. She, however, found an avenger in her own brother Absalom, like her the child of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur.

Absalom. Absalom allowed two years to pass without shewing that he bore any enmity to Amnon. At the end of this time, he invited the royal family to a feast on the occasion of the shearing of his sheep at Baal-hazor. When the feast was at its height Absalom's servants slew Amnon, and the rest of the king's sons fled. Fearing his father's wrath, Absalom took refuge with his grandfather at Geshur. (2 Sam. xiii.)

**The wise woman
of Tekoa.** Joab seems to have thought it advisable that the young prince should return to Jerusalem, and seeing that David himself was longing for his absent son, devised a means of

persuading the king to sanction his recall. He sent a wise woman of Tekoa to go into the king's presence with the following story. One of her sons had killed his brother, and the family demanded that the murderer should be given up to justice. The woman begged the king to save her guilty son, as if he were put to death she would lose both her children. The king then said, *As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.* Then the woman reminded the king that their cases were alike. Like her, he had lost one son, and by his own act he was doubly bereaved by the punishment of the second. David at once perceived that the woman was the mouthpiece of another. *Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?* he asked; and the woman replied that she had not spoken a word to the king which Joab had not put in her mouth. (2 Sam. xiv.)

Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but was forbidden to approach his father. After two years he forced Joab to bring about a reconciliation by burning his fields of barley; and David granted his son an interview and completely forgave him.

Revolt of Absalom. No sooner was Absalom restored to favour than he began his intrigues.

Every suitor who came to Jerusalem was received by him with expressions of regret that justice was so badly administered by David's officers that there was no hope of obtaining redress. Plain hints were given that if Absalom were but judge all would go well; and so gracious was the young prince's manner, that he *stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*

When the plot was ripe, Absalom asked leave to discharge a vow at Hebron. Spies had been sent throughout Israel to arrange for a general rising directly the news should come that Absalom was king. The director of the revolution was Ahithophel of Giloh, David's confidential adviser.

The conspiracy was so sudden and widespread that David had to leave his capital. He apparently had not any supporters in Israel except his own relatives Joab and Abishai, the two priests Zadok and Abiathar and their Levites, and the king's friend, Hushai the Archite. His sole military support was his body-guard and his foreign mercenaries, Cherethites, Pelethites and Gittites, commanded by the faithful Ittai, who positively refused to desert his master. (2 Sam. xv.)

David's flight from Jerusalem. The king refused to allow the Ark to accompany him. After crossing the Kidron and ascending the Mount of Olives, Hushai met David, but was told to go back to Jerusalem to defeat, if possible, the counsel of Ahithophel.

Ziba and Mephibosheth. After this, David came in contact with the adherents of the house of Saul. The only descendant of Saul whom David had been able to discover was Jonathan's crippled son Meribbaal or Mephibosheth. He was admitted to the royal household, and the administration of his estates was entrusted to Ziba, a former servant of Saul. (2 Sam. ix.; 1 Chron. viii. 34.)

Ziba met David on his flight from Jerusalem with provisions for his men, and announced that Mephibosheth had remained in the city in the hope of profiting by the revolution, and seizing the throne. A more direct proof of the hostility of Saul's family was seen at Bahurim, where a certain Shimei cursed David and cast stones at him, vowing that Absalom's rebellion was a just punishment for *all the blood of the house of Saul*—an evident reference to the slaying of the descendants of Saul to pacify the Gibeonites, whom Saul had caused to be massacred. (2 Sam. xvi. 1-14.)

Ahithophel. As long as David remained on the west of Jordan his case was hopeless. Absalom arrived at Jerusalem, and Ahithophel

asked to be allowed to be put in command of twelve thousand men, so that he might overtake David instantly and kill him.

Hushai. Fortunately for David, Hushai was able to play on the fear and vanity of the usurper. Supposing, he suggested, that David and his tried warriors were to surprise their pursuing force and to snatch a victory, all Israel would desert Absalom in dismay. It would be better to run no risks, but to wait until the whole nation were assembled. Then Absalom could lead the army in person, and gain all the glory himself without any danger. Absalom and his friends listened to this advice; and Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the two sons of the priests Zadok and Abiathar, escaped from the city to tell David that Ahithophel's counsel was rejected, and that the king had at least time on his side. Ahithophel, seeing that Absalom's cause was lost, went to his house and hanged himself. (2 Sam. xvii.)

David in Gilead. When David had crossed the Jordan, he found numerous adherents. The great chieftains hastened to him with provisions for his men. At their head was an Ammonite from Rabbah, Shobi the son of Nahash, whom David had probably put in the place of his adversary Hanun. Machir, the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and the venerable Barzillai the Gileadite are also named. At Mahanaim he found himself among friends, and at the head of an army commanded by three tried warriors, Joab, Abishai and Ittai. David wished to command in person, but his soldiers refused to allow him to risk his life. He therefore remained with the reserves in the city, after having given strict orders that Absalom's life was to be spared.

Defeat of Absalom. Absalom soon came with his army under the command of Amasa, a kinsman of Joab; but they were no match for David's generals. They were forced to retreat into a

wood, and were destroyed piecemeal. It was in the forest that Absalom met his doom. A man told Joab that he had seen Absalom hanging in an oak, and in answer to the question why he had not slain him then and there, reminded his general of the king's command. Without further words Joab repaired to the spot, and, assisted by his ten armour-bearers, slew Absalom.

David, in the meantime, was waiting for news at Mahanaim, more anxious about the fate of his disobedient son than that of his army. Joab had sent an Ethiopian slave to announce the defeat and death of Absalom; but Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, was so persistent in begging to be allowed to bear the tidings, that Joab let him go also. He outran the Ethiopian and proclaimed the news of victory, but evaded David's question about the safety of Absalom. When the Ethiopian arrived and was asked the same question, he replied: *The enemies of my lord the king and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!* (2 Sam. xviii. 24-33.)

After the defeat of Absalom the people returned to their homes, and David, overcome by grief, remained unconscious of all that was happening. Joab roughly aroused his master by the words: *Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry a man with thee this night.* (2 Sam. xix. 7.)

David's return. David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, bidding them prepare the men of Judah to receive him, and promising Amasa Joab's place at the head of the royal army.

He now returned in triumph to Jerusalem, after rewarding those who had assisted him, especially Barzillai the Gileadite, whose son Chimham he received at his court. At the fords of Jordan, Shimei made his submission and was pardoned. Mephibosheth seems to have aroused the king's suspicions, but his excuses were accepted, though half his property was given to Ziba.

**Sheba the son
of Bichri.**

Another revolt under a Benjamite, a member of Saul's tribe, now broke out.

Its leader was Sheba the son of Bichri, who drew all the tribes save that of Judah after him. Amasa was sent to quell this revolt, but was so dilatory that the rebellion became widespread, and Abishai was sent with the Cherethites and Pelethites. Joab went with them, and slew Amasa as he had slain Abner. He then took command, and drove Sheba into Abel-beth-Maachah. A wise woman of the town made a treaty with Joab on behalf of the townsmen, and Sheba's head was thrown over the wall. (2 Sam. xx.)

**The numbering
of the
people.**

II. Samuel closes with an account of David's sin in numbering the people.

We are told that God's anger was kindled against Israel, and he moved

David to number the people, commanding Joab to carry out the work. This was very distasteful to Joab and the captains of the host, and they only obeyed under protest. (2 Sam. xxiv. 1; 1 Chron. xxi. 1.)

It took them nine months and twenty days to complete their task, and at the end of that time David's heart smote him, and he prayed to the Almighty for forgiveness. The prophet Gad was sent to the repentant monarch to offer him three things: either seven years of famine, or three months pursuit by his enemies, or three days pestilence. David's reply was: *I am in a great strait; let us now fall into the hand of the Lord, for*

His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man. (2 Sam. xxiv. 14.)

Jehovah accordingly sent a pestilence which destroyed seventy thousand men. But when the angel stretched forth his hand over Jerusalem God said to him *It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.* Gad then came to David and told him to erect an Altar where the plague had ceased. The king bought from Araunah (or Ornan) the Jebusite the oxen, and the threshing-floor where the angel had appeared, for fifty shekels of silver, refusing to accept Araunah's offer of it as a gift, for he said he would not offer to God that which had cost him nothing. (2 Sam. xxiv.; 1 Chron. xxi.)

**Intrigues for
the Succession.**

The period described in the first chapter of the First Book of Kings depicts David as old and feeble, and his court a hot-bed of intrigues as to who should succeed him, in which Joab was the prime mover. He was supported by Abiathar the priest, who was probably jealous of the rising influence of the family of Zadok in furthering the claims of David's eldest son, Adonijah.

Bathsheba, however, had induced David to promise that Solomon, her son, should inherit the throne. She was supported by Nathan, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, who was in command of the royal body-guard. Adonijah invited his supporters to a banquet at En-rogel, in the valley of the Kidron, at which the cry, *God save king Adonijah!* was raised.

David was promptly informed of this by the supporters of Solomon, and gave orders that preparations should at once be made to proclaim Solomon king at Gihon.

When Adonijah and his friends heard that Solomon had been anointed king, the latter dispersed, and the former took refuge in sanctuary. Solomon spared his brother's

life, warning him, however, that he would not pardon him again if he further offended. (1 Kings i.)

No sooner, however, was David dead than Joab commenced his intrigues. He no doubt prompted Adonijah to ask Bathsheba to persuade Solomon to allow him to espouse Abishag. Solomon saw through the request. *Why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my elder brother; and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.* Adonijah was immediately put to death, and the aged Joab was torn from the horns of the Altar and slain, while Abiathar was banished to his estate at Anathoth. (1 Kings ii.)

SUMMARY.

David's sin and its punishment.

During the Ammonite war David saw and loved Bathsheba, and procured the death of her husband, Uriah the Hittite.

As a punishment the prophet Nathan told him that the sword would never depart from his house.

His favourite son Absalom murdered his brother Amnon in revenge for his conduct to Tamar.

Restored to favour, he rebelled against David, and almost succeeded in dethroning him. He was in the end defeated and slain by Joab, who afterwards suppressed another rebellion led by the Benjamite, Sheba the son of Bichri.

David numbered the people, and was punished by a three days pestilence, which was stayed at the threshing-floor of Araunah.

I. Kings i.—ii. tells us of the intrigues for the throne and the accession of Solomon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

I. Kings II.—XI.

David's choice of Solomon.

The accession of Solomon is the beginning of a new age in Israel. His reign was marked by great prosperity, and by an advance in arts and gentler manners. It is quite likely that David chose one of his younger sons to succeed him with this object in view, and that the alliance between his eldest surviving son, Adonijah, and Joab and Abiathar, was owing to a desire to carry on the ancient wild conditions that had prevailed in the days of Saul and David.

Contrast between David and Solomon.

For David, the founder of the dynasty, was a soldier-shepherd, who succeeded in a rough age by his courage and ability, and his education was that of practical experience. But Solomon in his youth had been trained in the arts of peace, for his father had probably looked forward to the time when his successor should advance Israel in culture, just as he had done in military achievement. The soldier-king recognised the importance of education, and gave further proof of genius in choosing the most cultivated of his sons as his successor.

Solomon's gift of wisdom.

From the first years of his reign Solomon seems to have proved himself worthy of the great inheritance left him by his father. He had triumphed over faction at home and hostility abroad, and had entered into a firm alliance with Pharaoh, the greatest monarch in the known world. How noble were the aims of the young king is shewn by

the story of his famous choice of wisdom. Jehovah appeared to him in a dream at Gibeon, and bade him ask for a favour at His hands. Solomon, in answer, prayed for *an understanding heart to judge Thy people*. The Lord granted his request, and added a promise that He would give him such riches and honour *that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days*. (1 Kings iii. 4-15; 2 Chron. i. 3-13.)

**The Judgement
of Solomon.**

The judgement of Solomon recorded, as a proof that he had been given wisdom by God, is that of the case of the two women and the dead and living child. Two women came before his judgement seat with this story. It appeared that they both shared one house and that they both had babies. One woman overlaid her child in the night so that it died; she then exchanged it for the living child of her neighbour. In the morning the mother of the living child discovered the deception, and when the other woman would not give it up, they both appealed to the king. One woman said, *The living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No, but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son*. (1 Kings iii. 22.)

The king solved the difficulty by calling for a sword, and commanded that the living child should be cut in two, and one half be given to one woman and the other half to the other. When the real mother heard that sentence, sooner than see it killed before her eyes, she cried out, *O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it*. Thus the king found out from this who was the real mother, and gave her the child. (1 Kings iii. 16-28.)

His Empire.

Solomon's empire included all the land between the Euphrates and the Brook of Egypt. David had utterly subdued Moab and Ammon, and Edom still remained a subject territory. David's

armies had subdued the Syrians of Zobah, and Solomon had taken Hamath, so nearly all Syria south of the Orontes recognised him as their king.

Commerce.

Solomon encouraged commerce, thereby bringing his people into relation with distant nations, and getting them to know the arts of a higher civilization than their own. With the growth of trade their minds grew broader; they learned to take an interest in other nations, and a spirit of adventure began to carry them to the distant parts of the then known world. The principal trade at this epoch was in chariots, and horses bred in Egypt, so Solomon acted as a go-between of that country and the Hittite or Canaanite kings.

Navigation.

In addition to the trade by land Solomon took the bold step of extending his commerce by sea. Not only was timber brought from Tyre on rafts to Joppa, but finally the king, with the assistance of his Phœnician ally, built ships to navigate the Red Sea and to import gold from the remote land of Ophir.

**Division of
Israel into
Districts.**

Solomon recognised that the clan system, which was the custom of the Hebrews, did not agree with his view of national unity. So he divided Israel into twelve districts, ignoring tribal distinctions. In this way, Solomon hoped to make his people forget their family feuds and unite in striving after national progress. To each of the twelve districts Solomon assigned the duty of providing for his court month by month. (1 Kings iv.)

The Temple.

Solomon's principal title to honour in the eyes of the Israelites was the erection of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Temple was the symbol of a union of the human race in brotherly charity based upon the Fatherhood of God. It is a noteworthy fact that the Temple was built by Phœnician craftsmen,

and that both David and Solomon sought the aid of Hiram, king of Tyre, to introduce their subjects to the arts of life. The Temple itself was not a large building, its dimensions being exactly double those of the Tabernacle. (1 Kings v., vi.)

Dedication.

The Temple was finished in seven years, and was dedicated in the seventh month.

The Ark and the vessels of the Sanctuary were brought by the priests and Levites, and on this occasion only the Ark was opened; and *There was nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb.* Throughout the ceremonies Solomon took the leading part, acting as both priest and king. His lips pronounced alike the Blessing and the Prayer of Dedication. (1 Kings vii.—ix.)

The Queen of Sheba.

The highest point Solomon's glory seems to have reached was when the Queen of Sheba came to visit him and to try him with hard questions, to every one of which she received an answer; and when she saw the splendour of the court of Israel *there was no more spirit in her. It was a true report, she exclaimed, that I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me.* (1 Kings x. 1-13.)

Unpopularity of Solomon's rule.

After this it seems that the prosperity of Solomon had already begun to decline. In the first place, the civilization he introduced was not suited to his people. Further, the ancient Israelites disliked trade, whereas Solomon encouraged commerce, which meant the employment of the hated foreigner to assist his schemes. Equally unpopular was Solomon's government. His kingdom was marked out into districts to supply the royal table month by month. The levies started to the Lebanon regularly, one relieving the

other in due order. But the Hebrews were accustomed to the utmost independence, and resented being put to anything like forced labour, which they saw threatened their liberty.

In addition to this, there was always the jealousy existing between Israel and Judah to be reckoned with. This had partially slumbered under David, was kept under with difficulty in the days of Solomon, and burst into a flame in those of his successor. (2 Sam. xix. 43, and xx. 1 Kings xi. 26-40; xii.)

**Revolt of
Jeroboam.**

The revolt of Jeroboam was an attempt of the tribe of Ephraim to overthrow Solomon's authority. Its leader was Jeroboam the son of Nebat, whom Solomon had employed in fortifying Jerusalem, and to whom he had entrusted the forced labour demanded from Ephraim. (1 Kings xi. 28.) Among the leaders was the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, whose native place makes us think that he may have been jealous of the rising Sanctuary at Jerusalem.

But Solomon was sufficiently strong to repress all symptoms of disaffection. Jeroboam fled to Egypt, as he saw that nothing could shake the royal authority as long as the king lived.

Sin of Solomon. The book of Kings attributes the misfortunes of Solomon's reign to the fact that in his old age his foreign wives turned away his heart, and he *forsook Jehovah*. He allowed his Moabite and other wives to build sanctuaries to their gods in Jerusalem. It has been said that this was due to the king's desire to please his foreign subjects, and attract them to his capital; but the scriptural explanation is that Solomon's action proved him to be unfaithful to his God, and that, as a punishment, besides Jeroboam two 'adversaries' were raised up to trouble him.

Hadad.

Hadad, the only surviving member of the royal house of Edom after David's war, and who had been protected by the king of Egypt during David's lifetime, returned to Edom when he heard that David and Joab were dead, and caused Solomon no little trouble. It appears, however, that the country was again subdued by the Israelites, as Solomon was able to carry on an important trade in the Red Sea. (1 Kings xi. 14-22; x. 26-28.)

Rezon.

Rezon, a vassal of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, had thrown off his allegiance when his master was defeated by David (2 Sam. viii. 3-12; x. 16-18), and became a freebooter. On the accession of Solomon he was strong enough to establish himself at Damascus, and is described as *an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon*. (1 Kings xi. 23-25.)

**The lasting
effects of
Solomon's
reign.**

Although Solomon's extravagance and oppression led up to the disruption of his kingdom, yet he left behind him much that was lasting. For the long peace he had secured, and the way he had opened up intercourse between his own people and distant nations gave an impulse towards civilization; and from his reign it is possible to date the imperishable literature of the Hebrews. The building of the Temple started a new development in religion, which made the faith of Israel indestructible; and the fortification of Jerusalem gave Judah a strength which enabled it to outlast every other nation.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) David's choice of Solomon to succeed him was probably in order to educate the nation in the arts of peace, as he had trained them in the art of war.

- (2.) Solomon had many difficulties in the early part of his reign, as now that David was dead, the peoples he had subdued tried to throw off the yoke of Israel. His chief foes were
- (i.) Hadad of Edom; and
 - (ii.) Rezon of Damascus.
- (3.) God gave Solomon, at his request, the gift of wisdom, a proof of which is given in the Bible by the Judgement of Solomon.
- (4.) Solomon's empire was extensive, as it went to the borders of the Orontes in Syria. His commerce and navy also made him famous.
- (5.) He divided Israel into districts to supply the royal table each month, which caused him to be unpopular, as the Israelites were very independent.
- (6.) The erection of the Temple is his chief glory, as it strengthened the religion of Israel.
- (7.) The visit of the Queen of Sheba marks the highest point of his power.
- (8.) He became unpopular, owing to the levies, and his love of commerce, which brought in many foreigners. Besides all this, Israel and Judah were always very jealous of one another.
- (9.) He is said to have forsaken the true worship of Jehovah in his latter days, under the influence of his foreign wives.
- (10.) His reign probably inaugurated an age of Hebrew literature and a lasting religion.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DISRUPTION OF THE KINGDOM, AND THE BAAL WORSHIP.

THE REIGNS OF REHOBOAM, ABIJAH, ASA,
KINGS OF JUDAH,
AND OF
JEROBOAM, NADAB, BAASHA, ELAH, ZIMRI, OMRI,
KINGS OF ISRAEL.

I. Kings xii.—xvi. II. Chronicles x.—xvi.

**Accession of
Rehoboam.**

After king Solomon's death, his son and successor, Rehoboam, was not able to assume the crown at Jerusalem, but had to assemble the tribes at Shechem, the capital of the haughty tribe of Ephraim, and to listen to the grievances of the people, who offered him their allegiance if he would promise to abolish, or at any rate relax, the claim to demand forced service from the Israelites. The wise old counsellors of Solomon advised moderation. Let the king give way now and bide his time, he would soon be as powerful as Solomon had been. But Rehoboam's young friends advised him to forsake *the counsel of the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father*, and to say, *My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.* (1 Kings xii. 1-15.)

Jeroboam.

Jeroboam's experiences in the days of Solomon had taught him caution. He returned from Egypt, but did not go to Shechem until he knew how Rehoboam would act. No sooner was

the king's foolish reply to his people's just demands made known, than all the tribes save Judah threw over his authority and cried :

*What portion have we in David ?
Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse :
To your tents, O Israel ;
Now see to thine own house, David.*

(1 Kings xii. 16.)

The Revolution. Adoram, who was over the levy, was apparently the only victim of the revolution. He was sent by Rehoboam to stop the disturbance, and was immediately stoned to death. The king fled to Jerusalem ; and Jeroboam, in obedience to the summons of the people, came to Shechem and was solemnly anointed king. The whole tribe of Judah and part of Benjamin rallied to the house of David ; but the prophet Shemaiah declared the thing to be from Jehovah, and sternly forbade the king to attempt to bring the rebellious tribes again under his sway. The division of the kingdom took place almost without bloodshed. The ten tribes took the name of Israel, and for a long time tried to conquer the little kingdom of Judah ; but they never succeeded, for the fact that Jerusalem was a great fortress, and that the Temple was the chief sanctuary, gave the men of Judah a distinct advantage.

Jeroboam and the calf worship. Jeroboam, seeing that the people were in danger of returning to the House of David if they were allowed to go up to the Temple to worship at Jerusalem, decided to establish the old calf-worship at the ancient sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel. He probably reminded his people that Jerusalem was not an ancient sanctuary, like Bethel, where Abraham had built an altar, and where Jacob had seen the angels of God ; or like Dan, which possessed a hereditary priesthood, founded by the grandson of no less a person than Moses. (Judg. xviii.

30, R.V.) The religious separation from Judah was called the *Sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*

The disobedient Prophet. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, one month later than the date on which the feast was observed in Judah, Jeroboam was offering solemn sacrifice on the altar at Bethel. Suddenly a prophet from Judah appeared, and told him that a day would come when a king of Judah, Josiah by name, would slay the priests of the high places upon that very altar. When Jeroboam tried to seize him his arm withered so that he could not draw it back, and the altar was rent before his eyes, as a sign that the prophet's words were true. At the request of the prophet his arm was restored. Though the king asked him to remain with him, the prophet refused, saying that he was forbidden to eat bread or drink water in Bethel, or to return by the way by which he came. An aged prophet at Bethel, hearing of these events, saddled his ass, and rode after the man from Judah, and begged him to come back with him. He told him that an angel of Jehovah had commanded him to make this request. The prophet from Judah consented to return; but as they were sitting at table, the spirit of the Lord came upon the prophet of Bethel and compelled him to give his guest this message: *Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient unto the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which He said to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.* (1 Kings xiii. 21, 22.)

On his way home, the prophet was slain by a lion, and the passers by saw that it had spared the ass and

was standing by the man's body without devouring it. When the old prophet of Bethel heard of this wonder, he rode to the spot, and recognised his guest in the dead man. He took up the body and buried it in his own sepulchre, after having made his sons take an oath to bury his bones beside those of the prophet of Judah, asserting that *the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.* (1 Kings xiii. 32.)

**Jeroboam and
Ahijah.**

This is not the only example of the fact that the prophets were bitterly disappointed in Jeroboam. For when Abijah his son fell sick, the king made his wife disguise herself and sent her to the aged Ahijah the Shilonite, to enquire whether the child would recover. The prophet, though blind, recognised her at once, and told her that her son would die as soon as her feet entered the city and announced the ruin of Jeroboam's house. When she entered the city of Tirzah, and reached the threshold of the house, the child died. (1 Kings xiv. 1-18.)

**Death of
Jeroboam.**

Jeroboam died after a reign of twenty-two years. In addition to his wars, he spent much energy upon fortifications, the chief of which were the building of Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and of Penuel in Gilead. He was succeeded by his son Nadab, who reigned two years and was slain by Baasha the son of Ahijah, while he was besieging Gibbethon. (1 Kings xv. 25-28.)

Baasha.

Baasha fulfilled the prophecy of Ahijah by massacring the whole family of Jeroboam, and *left not any that breathed.* He reigned twenty-four years, and was continually at war with Judah; but he displeased the prophets as much as Jeroboam had done. Jehu the son of Hanani foretold

the doom of his house, which came on his son Elah, who was slain by Zimri, captain of half his chariots, while

Zimri. *drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza his steward.* Zimri, during his

short reign of seven days, utterly destroyed the house of Baasha. (1 Kings xv. 29—xvi. 13.)

Omri. The people at this time were encamped against Gibbethon, and on hearing of the

rebellion of Zimri, they elected Omri, captain of the host, to be their king, and forthwith they raised the siege of Gibbethon, invested Tirzah and took it. Zimri saw that his plight was hopeless, and burned himself in his palace. Omri then entered upon a four years struggle for the throne with Tibni the son of Ginath. At the end of that time *Tibni died, and Omri reigned.* With the accession of Omri there came an end to a long period of civil strife. (1 Kings xvi. 15-22.)

Omri reigned over Israel twelve years, coming to the throne in the thirty-first year of Asa, king of Judah. During the first six years of his reign he made his capital at Tirzah. He then fortified a hill which he had bought from Shemer for two talents of silver, and built thereon a new capital, which he called Samaria or Shomeron, after its former owner. (1 Kings xvi. 23, 24.) He stopped the strife between the two Hebrew kingdoms; and there was peace between Israel and Judah so long as the house of Omri lasted. He appears to have tried to copy the policy of David and Solomon, by renewing the Phœnician alliance by a marriage between his son Ahab and Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. This led to the fall of his house, owing to the introduction of the worship of the Tyrian Baal. He subdued Moab, and compelled Mesha, king of Moab, to pay tribute, as we learn from the famous Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868. He also waged war with Syria, but seems to have had to make peace with them on unfavour-

able terms. But he earned the condemnation of the prophets, despite his might, as the worst king who had as yet reigned over Israel. (1 Kings xvi. 26.)

**History of
Judah.**

Meanwhile the kingdom of Judah had little peace. It was too weak to recover what Rehoboam's folly had lost, but strong enough to resist the attempts of the ten tribes to subdue it. Unlike the history of the Northern Kingdom, which we know only from I. and II. Kings, we have an account of the kings of Judah in II. Chronicles. This latter was written long after the Return, about B.C. 300 or later, and is of inferior value to the books of Kings. But the Chronicler may have had access to works lost to us, and cannot be wholly neglected.

Rehoboam.

Rehoboam had been forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah to resist Jeroboam, at the time of the disruption, so he turned his attention to fortifying fifteen cities and to making his little kingdom strong. According to the Chronicler (2 Chron. xi. 13, 14), the Priests and the Levites who had been turned out of Israel gave him their support for at least three years. In his fifth year, Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judah, took the fenced cities, and ravaged Israel as far as the plain of Esdraelon. He despoiled the treasury of the Temple and palace at Jerusalem, and took away Solomon's golden shields. For these Rehoboam substituted shields of brass. During all the twenty-two years Jeroboam occupied the throne of Israel there was war with Judah, but it was mostly a war of sieges. In the midst of this war, Rehoboam died, after a reign of seventeen years.

Abijah.

Abijah, who succeeded Rehoboam, only reigned three years; but one event in his reign is recorded, and that in Chronicles, namely his victory over Jeroboam in Mount Zemaraim in Mount

Ephraim. He was hopelessly outnumbered and was surrounded on all sides, but obtained a signal victory, because he trusted in Jehovah. (2 Chron. xiii.)

Asa. Abijah was succeeded by Asa in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel.

During the first ten years of his reign the land had peace, and the king employed this time not only in fortifying his cities and in training his army but in a purification of the Temple. Suddenly, Zerah the Ethiopian with a vast army invaded Judah, and was utterly defeated in answer to the prayers of the king. (2 Chron. xiv. 9-15.) The prophet Azariah, the son of Oded, came and exhorted Asa to make a more thorough reformation, which he did by deposing Maacah, the queen-mother, from her high position, for setting up an Asherah (A.V. grove) in Jerusalem, which he burned at the brook Kidron. (1 Kings xv. 9-15; 2 Chron. xv.)

Asa's alliance with Syria against Israel. In his later years Asa was hard pressed by Baasha, king of Israel, who, by fortifying Ramah, had prevented Judah from holding any communication with the North. Accordingly Asa sent an embassy to Benhadad, king of Damascus, to persuade him to attack Israel. Benhadad willingly acceded to Asa's request, and laid waste the whole of the north-west of Israel, so that Baasha was forced to turn his attention from Judah to his new foe. Asa destroyed Ramah, raised a general levy throughout his kingdom, and built Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah, out of the stones and timber he took from Ramah. (1 Kings xv. 17-22; 2 Chr. xvi. 1-6.)

Hanani the Seer. For his act of folly in calling in the Syrians to his aid he was rebuked by

Hanani the seer, who said, *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein thou hast done*

foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) Asa put the bold prophet into prison.

Death of Asa. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and we are told that *in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.* (2 Chron. xvi. 12.) He died two years later, and was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat.

SUMMARY.

ISRAEL.

There was no permanent government; one dynasty after another fell at the word of the prophets. Jeroboam's son was murdered by Baasha, Baasha's son by Zimri. There was constant war with Judah. At last Omri triumphed over all rivals and became undisputed king.

JUDAH.

Rehoboam's kingdom was invaded by Shishak, king of Egypt. In the war with Israel, his son and successor, Abijah, won a great victory over Jeroboam. Asa purified the Temple, defeated Zerah the Ethiopian, and when hard pressed by Baasha, persuaded Benhadad, king of Syria, to invade Israel.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRIFE BETWEEN THE WORSHIPPERS OF BAAL AND OF JEHOVAH.

ELIJAH.

**Ahab, Jezebel,
and Elijah.** The reign of Ahab is chiefly remarkable for the fact that it is the period of the great conflict between the worshippers of Jehovah and of the Zidonian Baal. Ahab had married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Zidon, and had, by her influence, allowed the introduction of this new form of idolatry. At this juncture Elijah appeared without warning, and foretold three years of famine as a punishment for the national sin. Elijah came from Gilead, a region where life was more simple and primitive than in Western Palestine. In answer to his denunciation, Jezebel promptly massacred the prophets of Jehovah. But Obadiah, Ahab's servant, possibly with the consent of his master, saved one hundred prophets.

After he had given his message Elijah mysteriously disappeared, and though Ahab searched every kingdom for him, he found him not. Meanwhile the prophet dwelt by the brook Cherith, and was fed by ravens, or by a tribe of Arabs (in Hebrew 'raven' and 'Arab' are almost identical).

**Elijah and
the widow of
Zarephath.** After the brook Cherith had dried up, the prophet went according to the word of the Lord to Zarephath, a town belonging to Zidon, where he was told that a widow would sustain him. When he came to the gate of the city, seeing a widow gathering sticks, he called her and asked her

to give him some water that he might drink. But when he asked her for some bread she told him that she had only a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse, and she was preparing a last meal for herself and her son. Elijah told her not to fear, but to make him a little cake, and promised her that the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil would not fail as long as the famine lasted. But later on, the boy fell ill, *so that there was no breath left in him*, and the mother reproached the prophet for *calling her sin to remembrance by slaying her son*. Elijah took the child to his chamber, and after praying to God to bring him back to life, restored him to his grateful mother. (1 Kings xvii.)

In the third year of the famine Ahab and his servant Obadiah were seeking for grass to save the horses and mules. Elijah suddenly revealed himself to Obadiah and told him to tell his master *Behold, Elijah is here*. But Obadiah, fearing that the Spirit of Jehovah would bear the prophet away, and that he would be punished for bringing false news, was reassured by the prophet's words: *As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day*.

**The sacrifice
on Carmel.**

Thus Ahab and Elijah met, and at the prophet's command the king assembled all the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel, where Elijah urged the people to choose which God they would serve. *If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him*. (1 Kings xviii. 21.) He further suggested that each side should erect an altar and place a bullock upon it—Elijah to Jehovah, and the prophets of Baal to their god. *And the God which answereth by fire, let him be God*. The people declared that they would abide by this test. The prophets of Baal behaved in a frantic fashion, leaping upon the altar, cutting themselves till their blood ran down, while Elijah calmly taunted them. When the hour of the evening sacrifice drew near,

the prophet called the people to him, and with twelve stones repaired the ruined Altar of Jehovah and made a trench around it. He then put the wood in order, cut the bullock in pieces, laid him on the wood, and gave orders that twelve barrels of water should be poured on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. The water ran round about the altar, so that the trench was filled with water. At the prayer of Elijah *the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, Jehovah, He is God; Jehovah, He is God!* (1 Kings xviii. 36-39.)

Massacre of
the prophets
of Baal.

Elijah thereupon commanded the people to slay the prophets of Baal on the banks of the brook Kishon; and himself ascended Mount Carmel with his servant, and

prayed. When the lad had looked seaward seven times, he saw a little cloud, *as small as a man's hand*, which was the sign of abundance of rain. The prophet then bade Ahab to hurry to Jezreel, and full of the spirit of Jehovah, girded up his loins and ran before the king's chariot.

Elijah's flight.

At this point the prophet, after the long strain following the events on Mount Carmel, seems to have for a time lost heart. For when he heard that Jezebel had sworn vengeance against him, he fled to the wilderness of Beersheba; but after he had gone a day's journey into the desert, he prayed God to take away his life. An angel comforted him and fed him, and in the strength of that food he went forty days and forty nights.

Elijah
at Horeb.

At the end of that time he arrived at Horeb, the Mount of God, and, like Moses, took refuge in a cave or cleft of a rock.

Here God came to him. His voice came and said, *What doest thou here, Elijah?* and after the prophet

had told his tale of woe, he was ordered to stand on the mount before the Lord. There then came a wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but the Lord was not in them. After this there came a *still, small voice*, in which the prophet recognised the Voice of God. He told him to anoint three persons, who, between them, would punish Israel for its apostasy and restore the true worship. They were Hazael, the future king of Syria; Jehu the son of Nimshi, the destroyer of the house of Ahab; and Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was to take the place of Elijah, who was assured by God *Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.* (1 Kings xix. 18.)

Anointing of
Elisha.

Elijah then went on to Abel-meholah, where he found *Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth; and Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him.* (1 Kings xix. 19.) Elisha recognised the call, but asked permission to bid farewell to his father and mother; but Elijah rebuked him, saying, *Go back, for what have I done to thee?* He then turned back, and sacrificed his oxen, and gave the flesh to the people. Then he arose and followed Elijah as his minister. In this way the reaction against the Baal worship began.

Naboth's
Vineyard.

An act of cruelty on the part of Jezebel was the reason for Elijah's final interview with Ahab. The king was very anxious to buy the vineyard of Naboth, a native of Jezreel. Naboth refused to sell it, and Ahab took his refusal so much to heart that he refused to eat. But when Jezebel heard about it, she had Naboth arrested on a charge of treason and blasphemy. He was stoned to death, and his land became the property of the crown.

When Ahab went to take possession of the

vineyard, Elijah suddenly appeared and was greeted by the guilty king with the words: *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* The prophet then delivered his message. For this crime the family of Ahab would be utterly destroyed; the dogs would lick up his blood on the very spot where they had licked up that of Naboth, and they would eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel. Ahab was struck with repentance; so Elijah told him that Jehovah would not bring the punishment upon his house until after his death. (1 Kings xxi.)

Elijah and
Ahaziah.

Elijah survived Ahab, for we learn that the prophet predicted the death of Ahab's eldest son, Ahaziah, who fell from a lattice, and hurt himself. The king did not send for Elijah, but despatched messengers to the oracle of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to enquire whether he would recover. Elijah met them and foretold the king's death. Twice the king sent fifty men to take him, and they were destroyed by fire; but on the third occasion Elijah, at the humble request of the captain of fifty, condescended to answer the summons.

The ascension
of Elijah.

The Ascension of Elijah is one of the most impressive stories of the Old Testament. Accompanied by Elisha he went to Gilgal, and commanded the younger prophet to await him there. But Elisha refused to obey his command. At Bethel and at Jericho the same thing occurred, though at both places the sons of the prophets warned Elisha in the words: *Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?* He answered, *Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.* Then they came to Jordan, and Elijah smote the waters with his mantle and they divided; and the two passed over dry-shod. They were now in the very district where Moses had died, perhaps actually on Mount Nebo. The prophet told his disciple to ask a favour of him; and he requested

that he might receive, as his first-born son, a double portion of the prophetic spirit. Elijah said: *Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou shalt see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.* As he was talking with Elisha, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared, and he was taken up. (2 Kings ii.)

SUMMARY.

- (1.) Ahab, the son of Omri, married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon, who introduced the worship of Baal, the god of her people.
- (2.) Elijah, the prophet of Gilead, was raised by God to oppose the national apostasy.
- (3.) The story of Elijah:
 - (a) He announced a sentence of famine, which lasted three years.
 - (b) At the end of that time, he appeared to Ahab and ordered him to assemble the people and the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel, where Jehovah by fire proved Himself to be God. The prophets of Baal were slain at the brook Kishon, and afterwards the rain came.
 - (c) When Elijah heard that Jezebel had sworn vengeance against him he fled to Mount Horeb, where he had a vision of God, and where he was told to anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat to be his successor, Jehu the son of Nimshi to be the future ruler of Israel, and Hazael to rule over Syria. He performed the first of these commands, and left the other two to his successor.

- (d) His last interview with Ahab was when he denounced him for the murder of Naboth; but when the king shewed signs of penitence, he told him that the doom of his house would not come until after his death.
- (c) After the death of Ahab he predicted the speedy death of Ahaziah his son, who had met with an accident, and consulted Baal-zebub and not Jehovah.
- (f) The last stage in the story is the ascension of the prophet in a chariot of fire into heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

AHAB AND HIS SYRIAN WARS.

1 Kings XX.—XXII.

Omri had raised the kingdom of Israel to the leading position of the states of Palestine. The Israelitish king was in fact the head of a confederacy of the lesser Hebrew nations, *i.e.*, Judah, Moab, and Edom. The alliance between Israel and Judah, which lasted as long as the dynasty of Omri, was strengthened by the inter-marriage of the royal families, and the sons of Ahab and Jehoshaphat bore the same names.

The supremacy of the House of Omri.

Ahab's war with Syria.

The chief enemy of Israel was Syria. The Syrians were a race akin to the Hebrews, and must be carefully distinguished from the Assyrians. They had been conquered by David, but rebelled under Rezon, who, in the days of Solomon, established himself as king in Damascus. (1 Kings xi. 23-25.) During the wars between Israel and Judah, Asa called Benhadad, king of Syria, to aid him against the king of Israel. Omri lost several cities to the Syrians; and Ahab seems to have been little more than a vassal of Benhadad II., who even made an insolent demand that he should search Ahab's palace at Samaria and take from it whatever he should please. This aroused the spirit of the Israelite king, who refused to submit, and challenged Benhadad to fight by his message, *Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast as he that putteth it off.* (1 Kings xx. 11.)

The response was an invasion of Israel. Benhadad came with his thirty-two vassal kings; but Ahab, by a prophet's advice, sent his army against the Syrians under the *young men of the princes of the provinces*, and completely defeated them.

The next year Benhadad returned with another army, and decided to fight upon the plains, as he thought that Jehovah was only powerful in the hills. But his army was again entirely overthrown, and fled to Aphek, where the king took refuge in an inner chamber. (1 Kings xx. 30.) His servants told him that Ahab was a merciful king, and advised him to put sackcloth on his loins, and a rope upon his head, and to make humble submission. This Benhadad did; Ahab treated him with clemency, and a peace advantageous to Israel was concluded. (1 Kings xx. 31-34.) But one of the prophets determined to rebuke the king in a dramatic manner. He commanded the first man he met to smite and wound him, and on his refusal, told him a lion would slay him for his disobedience;—a prediction which came to pass. The next man was more complaisant, and the prophet, disguised by his wound, awaited the king. When the king saw him, the prophet said that he had been entrusted with a prisoner of war under the peril of his life; but the prisoner had escaped, and what was he to do? The king naturally replied that his life was forfeited; whereupon he removed his disguise, and Ahab saw that his interrogator was one of the *sons of the prophets*. The king was informed that in sparing Benhadad he had spared a prisoner of Jehovah, and the sentence was pronounced, *Thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people*. (1 Kings xx. 42.)

**Rupture with
Syria.**

The peace between Israel and Syria lasted for three years. We do not know what was the reason for the fresh outbreak of hostilities, but we are told in I. Kings xxii. that at the

end of that time Ahab invited his guest and vassal, Jehoshaphat, to help him to recover Ramoth-Gilead. The king of Judah agreed, and the prophets were summoned that they might predict the result of the expedition. With one mouth they declared for a speedy victory; but as they did not invoke the Sacred Name, merely saying that *God (Elohim) would deliver Ramoth Gilead into the hands of the king*, Jehoshaphat asked whether there was not a prophet of Jehovah amongst them. Ahab replied that there was one prophet, Micaiah by name; but he always predicted evil against him. But when the king of Judah insisted on his presence, he was summoned. At first he, in a sarcastic vein, used the same words as the other prophets; but when Ahab adjured him to speak the truth, he said: *I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep which have no shepherd*. He then told the two kings his vision, which was that he saw the host of heaven consulting with Jehovah how Ahab could be led to his ruin. A spirit promised to enter into his prophets to deceive the king. Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, one of the prophets, smote him on the cheek, asking him *Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee?* Micaiah was sent to prison until Ahab should return in peace; but as he left the king's presence he said, *If thou return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me*. (1 Kings xxii. 1-28.)

**Death of
Ahab.**

At the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, Ahab—probably knowing that the Syrian king had given orders that the fight was to be only with the king of Israel—disguised himself as a common soldier, and was killed by the chance shot of an archer. He died a hero's death, held up in his chariot throughout the day, so that his soldiers might not know how serious was his wound. His body was brought to Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood in the pool of

Samaria, where the chariot had been washed. (1 Kings xxii. 29-38.)

**Assyrian
Monuments
and Ahab.**

We learn from a monument of Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, that Ahab, during his reign, was a member of a confederacy presided over by Hadadezer, king of Damascus, to which the king of Israel contributed the largest number of chariots, namely, two thousand. Its object was to stop the advance of the Assyrian army against Hamath; but the allies were defeated at Karkar in B.C. 854. This is the earliest date in the history of Israel which can be definitely fixed.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) Omri restored the prosperity of Israel, but could not arrest the progress of Syria.
- (2.) The alliance between Israel and Judah lasted throughout the continuance of this dynasty, and was strengthened by the intermarriage of the royal families.
- (3.) Ahab, after long enduring the tyranny of the king of Syria, defeated Benhadad in two campaigns, and was rebuked by a prophet for sparing the Syrian king's life.
- (4.) After a three years peace, he with his ally Jehoshaphat went against Ramoth-Gilead, in spite of the warning of the prophet Micaiah, and met his death from the chance shot of a Syrian archer. The dogs of Samaria licked up his blood in Samaria, according to the prophecy of Elijah.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ELISHA AND THE HOUSE OF JEHU.

II. Kings II.—X.; XIII.

Elisha. Elisha was called to the prophetic office in the days of Ahab, and ministered to Elijah till the early part of the reign of Jehoram. He survived the fall of the dynasty of Ahab and the reigns of two kings of the house of Jehu, dying after Joash, the grandson of Jehu, had ascended the throne. His was the animating spirit which preserved Israel through the trials of the Syrian wars.

His life's work. The following is a brief account of his work. He helped the allied kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom against Mesha, king of Moab. He also aided Jehoram against the Syrians. He carried out Elijah's commission to appoint Hazael as successor to Benhadad, king of Syria, as the scourge of Israel; and sent one of his disciples to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, thus preparing for the overthrow of the house of Omri, and the destruction of the Baal worship.

His miracles. Many miracles are related as having been performed by him. With one exception—the punishment of the lads who mocked him, and who were destroyed by bears—Elisha's wonders were kindly. He healed the spring at Jericho by casting salt into the bitter waters. (2 Kings ii. 19-22.) He multiplied the oil of a widow of one of the prophets, to enable her to pay her debt. (*ib.* iv. 1-7.) When the prophets at Gilgal put some poisonous herbs in the pot by mistake, Elisha made matters right by casting in

meal. He multiplied twenty loaves which a man from Baal-Shalisha brought to him, sufficiently to feed a hundred men. He also caused a prophet's axe-head to swim when it fell into the water. And we are told that when a corpse was placed in his tomb it was restored to life. (2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.) Two of Elisha's miracles are related more fully in II. Kings. One is the raising of the son of the Shunammite woman; the other is the cure of Naaman.

**The raising of
the son of the
Shunammite.**

The Shunammite woman was very kind to the prophet, for she gave him a room whenever he came to her neighbourhood. He was so grateful that he offered her many things, but Gehazi, the prophet's servant, told his master that the desire of the Shunammite's heart was a son, and that blessing was promised. The boy grew up, and his father took him to see the reapers. He must have had sunstroke, for he cried, *My head, my head!* and was taken home to die on his mother's knees. She then laid the child's body on the prophet's bed, and ordered her ass to be saddled that she might go to Elisha. Gehazi came to meet her, but she would not tell him what had happened. She then threw herself at the prophet's feet, and when Gehazi tried to thrust her away, Elisha rebuked him, saying, *Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her, and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.* When Elisha heard that the child was dead, he sent on Gehazi with his staff to place on the child's face, and himself followed with the Shunammite, who would not leave him, and restored the boy to life.

Afterwards, the king of Israel took away the lands of the Shunammite, but they were restored when Gehazi told the king that the woman was *she whose son Elisha raised from the dead.* (2 Kings iv. 8-37; viii. 1-6.)

Naaman. The story of Naaman the Syrian is probably the best known of Elisha's miracles. Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, and a great man, *but he was a leper*. A little maid who was an Israelitish captive told the wife of Naaman that the prophet in Samaria could cure her master. So the king of Syria sent Naaman with a letter to the king of Israel. When the king rent his clothes and declared that the letter was simply an excuse for waging war against him, Elisha sent him a message that he should send Naaman to him.

When Naaman came to the house of the prophet, Elisha told him to wash seven times in Jordan. Taking this as an insult to his country, the Syrian exclaimed, *Are not Abanah and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? So he turned and went away in a rage*. But his servants said, *My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?* Naaman then washed in Jordan and was cleansed. When he returned and offered presents to the prophet, they were refused; but Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was smitten with the *leprosy of Naaman* for accepting a gift from him.

Elisha and the Syrian wars. Meanwhile there was constant war between Israel and Syria. Elisha was a tower of strength to the king of Israel, for he was able to reveal to him all the plans of the king of Syria. When the Syrians sent a host against the prophet, they discovered him at Dothan, and surrounded the city. His servant was terrified, but Elisha said, *They that be with us are more than they that be with them*. He then prayed that the eyes of the servant might be opened, and in answer to that prayer he saw *horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*.

Elisha then smote the Syrians with blindness, and led them to Samaria. The king of Israel wanted to kill

them; but in the end he took the prophet's advice, and treated his foes with kindness and sent them back to their own land. (2 Kings vi. 8-23.)

Some time later, Benhadad besieged Samaria, and the famine was so great that women ate their own children. The king of Israel sent messengers to kill Elisha; but he replied that on the morrow there would be great plenty in the city. The next day some lepers found that the Syrians had left their camp in a panic, as they thought that the kings of the Egyptians and of the Hittites had been hired to attack them. (2 Kings vi. 24—vii. 20.)

Hazael.

Elisha had one more task laid upon him by Elijah, namely to anoint Hazael to be the greatest enemy of Israel to avenge the sins of the house of Ahab. He came to Damascus, where Benhadad was lying sick, and Hazael was sent by his master to enquire whether he would recover. The man of God foretold the king's death, gazed upon Hazael, and wept. He then told him what evil he would do to Israel. This encouraged Hazael to ask, How could he, a mere dog, perform such glorious things? He then left the prophet, murdered his master, and became king of Syria. (2 Kings viii. 7-15.)

Jehu.

The house of Jehu reigned longer than any dynasty of Israel. Jehu was in command of the army which was besieging Ramoth-Gilead. During the siege a young prophet, acting under the instructions of Elisha, rushed in among the captains of Israel, and asked to see Jehu alone. He then anointed him king over Israel, and went as suddenly as he had come. Jehu returned to his companions, and after he had found they were not privy to the plot, told them what had happened. He was promptly proclaimed king with acclamation. (2 Kings ix. 1-13.)

**Joram of
Israel slain.**

After Jehu had been proclaimed king at Ramoth-Gilead, he drove in his chariot to Jezreel, where Joram, king of Israel, who had been wounded by the Syrians, was staying with his kinsman, Ahaziah, king of Judah. When Jehu's chariot came in sight, messengers were sent, but were not allowed to return; and at last the two kings, recognising that it was the chariot of Jehu the son of Nimshi, *for he driveth furiously*, went out to meet him. Jehu then drew his bow to the full and killed Joram, and his followers pursued Ahaziah and killed him also. The body of Joram was cast into the plot of Naboth, according to the prophecy of Elijah. (2 Kings ix. 16-26.)

**Death of
Jezebel.**

When Jehu came into the city he was taunted by Jezebel, who, attired in royal robes, asked him, *Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer?* He commanded the eunuchs of the palace to cast her out of the window, and her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses of Jehu as he entered the city. During the banquet held to celebrate his success he gave orders to bury the late queen, *for she is a king's daughter*, but the dogs had already eaten her up. (2 Kings ix. 30-37.)

**Massacre of
Ahab's family.**

The effect of the successful revolt of Jehu is shewn by the behaviour of the rulers of Samaria, who sent the heads of the seventy sons of Ahab in baskets to Jezreel, to earn the favour of the new king. Forty relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah, were also slain.

**Destruction of
the Baal
Worship.**

Jehu, after the murder of the kinsmen of Ahaziah, was met by Jehonadab the son of Rechab, the founder of a sect who, as we learn from Jeremiah, refused to dwell in house, cultivate the land, or drink wine (Jer. xxxv.), and was encouraged by him in his campaign of

slaughter. Apparently at his instigation, Jehu collected all the worshippers of Baal in the temple of their god, which he surrounded with soldiers, who slew the unarmed multitude. *Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.* (1 Kings x. 1-28.)

**The dynasty
of Jehu.**

The dynasty of Jehu was, in accordance with the word of a prophet, allowed to continue till the fourth generation, longer than any other in the blood-stained history of Israel. There were five kings in this family: namely, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II., and Zechariah. We do not learn much about the reigns of these kings, but evidently the Syrians oppressed them; but their power waned, and Jeroboam II. was master of a territory almost as great as that of Solomon.

**The Syrian
Oppression.**

In the reign of Jehu, Hazael ravaged the whole of Eastern Palestine, according to the prediction of Elijah; he also raided the western side as far as Jerusalem. (2 Kings xii. 17.) Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, had only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand soldiers. But his grandson, Joash, according to the prophecy of Elisha, defeated the Syrians three times in Aphek and *recovered the cities of Israel.* The last great king of this dynasty, Jeroboam II., had a victorious career, and conquered Damascus.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) Elisha appointed to be the successor of Elijah, in the days of Ahab. He lived until Joash, the grandson of Jehu, had become king.
- (2.) His work was—
 - (a) Political;
 - (b) Social.

- (a) His political work was as follows: He helped the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, against Mesha, king of Moab. He helped Jehoram against the Syrians; he appointed Hazael to be king of Syria and to be the scourge of Israel; and sent a disciple to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. On his death bed he told the young king, Joash, that he would be victorious over Syria three times.
- (b) His social work consisted in the care he took of the sons of the prophets, and the miracles he performed on their behalf. He raised the Shunammite's son, and cured Naaman the Syrian.
- (3.) Jehu, the son of Nimshi, was besieging Ramoth-Gilead, when a young prophet, sent by Elisha, anointed him as king. The army supported him, so he went to Jezreel and slew Joram, king of Israel, and by his orders Ahaziah king of Judah and Jezebel the queen-mother were also slain. The rulers of Samaria sent the heads of seventy of the royal family in baskets to Jehu as a token of their submission, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab encouraged him to massacre the Baal worshippers. *Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.*
- 4.) His dynasty reigned longer than any other in Israel, and consisted of five kings. Jehu and Jehoahaz were oppressed by the Syrians, but Joash defeated them three times, and Jeroboam was so successful that he extended the borders of his kingdom from Hamath to the Dead Sea.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH BECAME INVOLVED WITH ASSYRIA.

II. Kings XI.—XV.

II. Chronicles XXII.—XXVIII.

Amos.

Hosea.

**House of Jehu,
king of Israel.** We have already read that Jehu destroyed the house of Ahab as well as the Baal worship, and that for this reason it was promised that his family should reign for four generations. (2 Kings x. 30.) Israel must have been greatly weakened by the fall of the house of Omri, and in the reign of Jehu *the Lord began to cut Israel short*. Hazael ravaged Gilead and overran Israel. Jehu died after a reign of twenty-eight years, and was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who reigned seventeen years, during which time he and his people were in great straits owing to the Syrians. So sore were his defeats, that his army was reduced to fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; whereas Ahab, according to the monuments, had sent two thousand chariots against the Assyrians.

**Jehoash or
Joash.** Joash ruled for sixteen years. Under him matters mended somewhat, for when Elisha was on his death-bed the king came to visit him, and was told to open the window that looked eastward and to draw his bow. The dying prophet laid his hands upon the bow and said, *The Lord's arrow of salvation, even the arrow of salvation*

over Syria. The king, at the prophet's command, smote the ground; but as he apparently did not believe Elisha, and smote it but thrice, he was told he would not consume Syria, but would have only three victories.

Jeroboam II. Joash was succeeded by his son, Jeroboam II., during whose reign of forty-one years Israel became almost as great as in the time of Solomon. This king, encouraged by the prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, took advantage of the weakness of Syria to restore *the border of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah.* (2 Kings xiv. 23-29.)

The literary prophets: Amos and Hosea. The result of the ultimate success of Israel against Syria in the days of Jeroboam II. was due to the rapid advance of the Assyrian power in Western Asia, but it led to religious revival and renewed confidence in Jehovah in Israel. But although outward signs of religion were everywhere displayed, the true prophets recognised that these were as hollow and deceptive as the temporary prosperity of the nation.

Amos. Amos, a herdsman of Tekoa in Judah (Amos i. 1), foretold that an Assyrian invasion, which, however, he never directly mentions, was inevitable. He surveyed the neighbouring nations and declared that the heritage of Israel was the fairest of them all; but though there were outward observances in profusion, the oppression of the poor by the rich, the luxury of the ladies of Samaria, and the prevalence of drunkenness, were bound to provoke the anger of Jehovah. His bold preaching gave great offence, and Amaziah the priest of Bethel ordered him to leave the royal sanctuary and escape to his own country. Amos replied that he was *neither a prophet nor a prophet's son*, but a messenger sent by Jehovah to announce the fall and the captivity of Israel and of Amaziah's family. (Amos vii. 10-17.)

After the death of Jeroboam, who reigned forty-one years, we enter upon a period of anarchy. His son Zechariah was murdered by Shallum the son of Jabesh, who was in turn put to death by Menahem the son of Gadi. During the civil war which followed, Menahem committed many atrocities. In the latter reign we get the first mention of an Assyrian king. We read that Menahem paid Pul, king of Assyria, a thousand talents to be confirmed in his kingdom. He raised the money by taxing the richer Israelites. Thus Israel became tributary to Assyria. (2 Kings xv. 8-22.)

Civil wars after the death of Jeroboam II. Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, after a reign of two years, was murdered by Pekah the son of Remaliah, captain of his body-guard, who *smote him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house*. Pekah reigned for twenty years, and was murdered in his turn, at the instigation of the Assyrians, by Hoshea the son of Elah, the last king of Israel. Thus the closing days of the history of the Northern kings is one of repeated seditions and murders.

Menahem. At this time Hosea prophesied. Events had moved very fast since the days of Amos; and the difference in the tone of the two prophecies helps us to understand the political events which caused them. In the case of Amos prosperity and national arrogance had been the sins of Israel, but in the times of Hosea despair had seized upon the land. The priests had no moral influence, and the prophets were active, but disregarded. Hosea denounced the profligacy of the priests and nobles as well as the idolatrous worship of Samaria, and warned the people that, owing to their apostasy Jehovah, despite His love for Israel, was about to abandon the nation to its doom.

History of Judah.

We must now return to the history of the Southern kingdom. During the rule of the house of Omri, the two kingdoms had been in alliance. But when Jehu exterminated the house of Ahab, and slew Ahaziah and his brethren

Athaliah.

(2 Kings x. 12-14), *Athaliah, the daughter of Omri*, and mother of the murdered king, realising what had happened, gave instructions that all the seed royal of Judah should be slain. *But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons, which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse.* (2 Kings xi. 2.) This royal lady was the wife of Jehoiada, the priest of Jehovah, and the young king's aunt. (2 Chron. xxii. 11.) She hid Joash in the Temple for six years. Meanwhile Athaliah encouraged the Baal worship, and Mattan its priest. The worship of Jehovah in the Temple apparently continued to be carried on under the priest Jehoiada.

In the seventh year of Athaliah Jehoiada summoned the chief men of the nation and the captain of the guard, and presented to them the boy king, to whom they swore allegiance. He then divided them into three bands, armed them with king David's spears and shields which were in the Temple, and arranged for the coronation on the following Sabbath. When Athaliah heard the sound of the shout, *God save the king!* she rushed in and cried, *Treason, treason!* Jehoiada commanded her to be taken out of the Temple precincts and slain, together with her priest Mattan. (2 Kings xi. 4-20; 2 Chron. xxiii.)

Reign of Joash.

Although Joash reigned for forty years, we know very little about him. From the account given us in Kings and Chronicles we learn the following facts. He was seven years old when he

began to reign, and during his minority Jehoiada acted as regent, under whom the worship of Jehovah was restored, and the altars of Baal destroyed. (2 Kings xi. 17-20; 2 Chron. xxiii. 16-21.) As the Temple needed repairs, by the command of the king a chest was placed by the Altar for alms, and the money placed therein paid the wages of those who did the work of restoration. (2 Kings xii. 1-16; 2 Chron. xxiv. 1-14.) As long as Jehoiada lived Joash remained true to Jehovah. When Jehoiada died he was buried in the sepulchre of the kings *because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward His House.* (2 Chron. xxiv. 15-16.)

**Apostasy of
Joash.**

After the death of his uncle, Joash was persuaded by his princes to restore the idolatrous worship, in spite of the protests of the prophets. At last, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada rebuked him in strong terms: *Because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you.* At the king's command he was stoned to death in the court of the House of the Lord. (2 Chron. xxiv. 20 ff.; Matth. xxiii. 35.)

**Invasion by
Hazeal.**

God's punishment came in the form of an invasion of Judah by Hazeal, king of Syria, who with a small army defeated Joash. The price of peace was the sacrifice of the Temple treasures. (2 Chron. xxiv. 23, 24; 2 Kings xii. 17, 18.) Finally Joash, who was smitten with disease, was murdered in his bed by an Ammonite and a Moabite, and was not buried in the sepulchre of the kings, or treated with the honours usual at the burial of a king of Judah. (2 Chron. xxiv. 25-26; 2 Kings xii. 20-21.)

Amaziah.

Joash was succeeded by his son Amaziah, who was twenty-five years old. His reign lasted twenty-nine years. His first act was to execute the murderers of his father, but he refrained

from putting their families to death, in obedience to the law (Deut. xxiv. 16) which forbade this practice. (2 Chron. xxv. 1-4; 2 Kings xiv. 1-6.)

**War against
Edom.**

Amaziah then gathered his own men and also hired Israelites to attack Edom, which had revolted in the days of Jehoram. (2 Kings viii. 20-22.) But as a prophet warned him that he would not prosper if he took the Israelites, he dismissed them, and in revenge they sacked several of the cities of Judah. Amaziah smote Edom, and took their rock fortress of Selah. (2 Kings xiv. 7; 2 Chron. xxv. 5-13.)

**War with
Israel.**

Elated by his success, and perhaps indignant at the conduct of Joash, Amaziah challenged the king of Israel to fight him. The contemptuous answer of the latter in the parable of the thistle shews how disdainfully the Northern monarchs looked down upon their rivals in Judah. Amaziah was utterly defeated, and the king of Israel punished him by the destruction of the northern wall of Jerusalem. He also took away many treasures from the Temple. (2 Chron. xxv. 17-24; 2 Kings xiv. 8-14.) Fifteen years after the death of Jehoash king of Israel, Amaziah was murdered at Lachish, whither he had fled from a conspiracy at Jerusalem. (2 Kings xiv. 17-20; 2 Chron. xxv. 27.)

**Azariah or
Uzziah.**

His son, Azariah or Uzziah, was made king by popular acclamation at the age of sixteen years, and reigned fifty-two years. So long as he sought the Lord in the days of a prophet named Zechariah he prospered more than any of the kings before him. He fortified Jerusalem, encouraged the art of husbandry, and increased and remodelled his army. But, according to the Chronicler, he usurped the priestly office by burning incense in the Temple, and was stricken with leprosy. For the last seven

years of his reign Jotham, his son, acted as regent. (2 Kings xv. 5; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-21.)

Jotham. Jotham, who reigned sixteen years, carried on the work of his father and strengthened the kingdom. He conquered the Ammonites, and made them pay a heavy tribute. (2 Chron. xxvii. 5.) At the latter part of his reign he was harassed by Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria. (2 Kings xv. 37.) Although both Uzziah and Jotham are commended as virtuous kings, it is specially noted, that they did not remove the high places.

SUMMARY.

ISRAEL.

- (1.) There were five kings of the house of Jehu: Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II., and Zechariah.
- (2.) Under Jehu, Hazael ravaged Gilead, and invaded Israel.
- (3.) Jehoahaz lost almost all his army in the Syrian wars.
- (4.) Joash was able to defeat the Syrians three times, in accordance with the prophecy of Elisha on his death-bed.
- (5.) Jeroboam II. raised the power of Israel to its greatest height. Under him Amos prophesied.
- (6.) Then followed a period of anarchy. Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, was murdered by Shallum; Shallum by Menahem, who paid tribute to Assyria; Menahem's son by Pekah; and Pekah by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. Hosea's prophecies belong to this age of decline.

JUDAH.

- (1.) Joash was placed on the throne by Jehoiada, the priest. He apostatised after Jehoiada's death. Hazael invaded Judah.
- (2.) Amaziah defeated Edom, and was in turn defeated by Joash, king of Israel.
- (3.) Uzziah (or Azariah) reigned long and prosperously. He was smitten with leprosy.
- (4.) Jotham acted as his father's viceroy, defeated the Ammonites and reigned virtuously, but *the high places were not taken away.*

CHAPTER XX.

AHAZ AND THE FALL OF SAMARIA.

II. Kings XVI.--XVII. II. Chronicles XXVIII.

Isaiah VII.—VIII.

Ahaz and
the Syro-
Ephraimitish
War.

Jotham was succeeded by his son Ahaz, who ascended the throne when he was twenty years old. Ahaz was a weak and wicked king, and unfaithful to Jehovah, and actually *made his own son to pass through the fire to Moloch.*

Invasion of
Judah.

The important event in his reign is the invasion of Judah by the allied armies of Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria. The invasion was two-fold. The Syrians under Rezin went through Edom and seized Eloth on the Red Sea, which from that time became a Syrian port. Pekah defeated the army of Ahaz, who feared that he would be deposed in favour of the son of Tabeel, the candidate of the confederacy. The allied armies threatened Jerusalem, evidently with the object of forcing Judah to join in an alliance against Assyria. It is not surprising, therefore, that *the heart of Ahaz was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind.* (Isa. vii. 2.)

Tiglath-Pileser
attacks Israel
and Syria.

During this crisis Ahaz sent a message to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, imploring him to help him. Tiglath-Pileser aided his vassal by invading Palestine in B.C. 734, captured Gaza, and a number of towns in Gilead, Galilee and Naphtali, and carried the inhabitants

captive to Assyria. (2 Kings xv. 29.) The next year he attacked Syria. He took Damascus, carried off its inhabitants to Kir, and slew Rezin. Ahaz then came to Damascus to do homage to Tiglath-Pileser, and on his return to Jerusalem erected an altar in the Temple on the plan of one that he had seen. (2 Kings xvi. 10-16.)

At the time of Pekah's expedition against Jerusalem, the great prophet, Isaiah, appears prominently. He was a man of noble family, called to his office in the year that king Uzziah died; and at the time of the invasion of Judah by the Syrians and Israelites, he was already a prophet of repute and influence, and the father of a son called Shear-Jashub. (Isa. vii. 3.) Like all the prophets of his age, he saw that the grinding down of the poor by the rich was at the root of the evils of the time. He had foretold that a day would come when the rulers of Israel would be like children, too feeble to rule the state, and that the ruling power would come from the harem. (Isa. iii. 12.)

Under Ahaz his words were fulfilled, and never was a king of Judah more blameworthy than he for inviting the intervention of Assyria. When Pekah and Rezin appeared before Jerusalem, Isaiah met Ahaz and told him plainly that neither Pekah nor Rezin were really to be feared. They were *two tails of smoking firebrands*, whose light would speedily be quenched, and the land would soon be free from both Israelite and Syrian attacks. Isaiah then invited Ahaz to ask for a sign from God that deliverance would come. But the king, who felt that help was already on the way from Assyria, said, *I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord*. Isaiah sternly rebuked him, saying, *Hear ye this, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also?* (Isa. vii. 3-13.)

Immanuel.

The sign which Jehovah gave to Ahaz was, *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel* (God with us). St. Matthew sees the fulfilment of this in the birth of Our Lord (Matth. i. 22, 23), but to Ahaz it must have meant that a child would soon be born, in whose infancy Judah would be delivered from Pekah and Rezin. Isaiah expressly says that this would come to pass before the child knew *how to refuse the evil and choose the good*. The real danger, as the prophet says, was from Assyria, whose king he calls *the razor that is hired*.

The fall of Israel.

The fall of Israel was now near. Pekah was murdered by Hoshea the son of Elah, who had been instigated by the Assyrians to seize the throne. Hoshea reigned nine years. During the first six he was loyal to Assyria; till Sabako or So, king of Egypt, induced him to rebel against Shalmaneser IV.

The Assyrians besieged Samaria for three years, and the city was taken in B.C. 722 by Sargon the successor of Shalmaneser. With the fall of Samaria the kingdom of Israel fell to rise no more. (2 Kings xvii. 23.)

The Samaritans. The Assyrian monuments say that only twenty-eight thousand captives were taken away from Samaria, but we are informed in the book of Kings that the inhabitants of Israel were deported and placed in Halah and Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. Half a century later, Esarhaddon (B.C. 681-668) placed natives of Babylon, Cuthah, Sepharvaim, and other cities, in the cities of Samaria. (2 Kings xvii. 24; Ezra iv. 2.) These were afterwards known as Samaritans.

We are told that in the beginning of their settlement in their new land they did not fear the Lord, who *sent lions among them, which killed some of them*. Accord-

ingly they sent to the king of Assyria, asking him to send some one to teach them *the manner of the God of the land*. One of the priests who had been taken captive was sent to Bethel, to teach them *how they should fear the Lord*. (2 Kings xvii. 25-28.)

The bitterly hostile Jewish account of these settlers in the book of Kings represents them as half idolators, *fearing the Lord and serving their own gods*; but they themselves gloried in being descendants of Jacob and Joseph, and at a later date certainly worshipped none but the God of Israel. (2 Kings xvii. 32-41; S. John iv. 20.)

SUMMARY.

JUDAH.

- (1.) Ahaz succeeded Jotham. Israel and Syria make an alliance against Judah, and Ahaz seeks help of Tiglath-Pileser.
- (2.) Isaiah appears and encourages Ahaz against Pekah and Rezin: he also gives Ahaz the sign of Immanuel.

ISRAEL.

- (3.) Pekah murdered by Hoshea, the last king of Israel.
- (4.) Hoshea allies with Egypt against Assyria.
- (5.) Samaria besieged by Shalmaneser IV., captured by Sargon.
- (6.) The rise of the Samaritan nation and schism.

CHAPTER XXI.

HEZEKIAH.

II. Kings XVIII.—XX.

II. Chronicles XXIX.—XXXII.

Isaiah XXXVI.—XXXIX.

Micah.

Importance of Judah. With the fall of Samaria the message of the ten tribes to mankind ceased. The sole hope, therefore, of the worshippers of the true God was henceforward centred in Judah; and the century that followed the retreat of Sennacherib gave the Southern Kingdom time to reform the national religion on so stable a basis that no subsequent calamity was able to shake it. Three names deserve to be held in special honour as the saviours of the faith of Israel at this critical time: Hezekiah the king, and Micah and Isaiah the prophets.

Micah. Micah was a native of Moresheth-Gath, a village among the hills which slope towards the Philistine country. As he foretold the destruction of Samaria, he must have prophesied when the Assyrians first appeared in Palestine. He denounced the oppressive conduct of the ruling class in Judah; and as a punishment for their crimes he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem.

Isaiah. Isaiah, the counsellor of Ahaz and Hezekiah, was a statesman prophet, who formulated a national policy, which preserved alike the material and religious privileges of the community. He

knew that Egypt could not be depended upon, and that an alliance with Babylon against Assyria could bring no profit to his country. He saw that none of Judah's allies could be trusted, and that its true security lay in remaining quiet, assured of the Divine protection.

**The character
of Hezekiah.**

Hezekiah receives the highest praise from the author of the book of Kings: *He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him.* (2 Kings xviii. 5.) But Isaiah does not always seem to have been in accord with him, for he denounced his minister Shebna (Isa. xxii. 15-19), as well as his intrigues with Egypt. (Isa. xxx.-xxxiii.)

In the early days of his reign Hezekiah appears to have followed the crooked policy of his father Ahaz, which, after some initial successes, ended in B.C. 701 by bringing Judah to the verge of ruin. But, warned by his disasters, the king finally turned to God, and submitted to the guidance of Isaiah.

**Sargon and
Hezekiah.**

Though only once mentioned by name in the Bible (Isa. xx. 1), Sargon, the successor of Shalmaneser IV., played a great part in the history of Palestine. He completed the reduction of Samaria, and then marched into Babylonia against its king, Merodach-Baladan. In 720 B.C. he took Hamath, the ancient ally of Judah in the far north. He then went south and defeated So, king of Egypt, and the king of Gaza, at the battle of Raphia; and in 715 he took many Arabian captives and placed them in the cities of Samaria. While Sargon was engaged in suppressing a rebellion in Ararat, Hezekiah took a leading part in revolting against him. He overthrew the Assyrian party in Philistia, sending an embassy to Egypt to ask for assistance against

Assyria; a step which was deeply deplored by Isaiah. (Isa. xix. 1-17.)

**Hezekiah's
illness.**

In the midst of these intrigues Hezekiah was visited by a serious illness. He was cured by Isaiah in answer to his earnest prayers, who gave him a sign, declaring that the shadow should go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, and promised him that he should reign for fifteen years more. (2 Kings xx. 1-11; Isa. xxxviii.; 2 Chron. xxxii. 24.)

**Merodach-
Baladan.**

At this time Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, sent an embassy to Jerusalem on the pretext of congratulating the king on his recovery, but really to arrange a simultaneous rising against the Assyrians in Palestine and Babylonia. Isaiah rebuked the king for his conduct in showing the Babylonians all his preparations for war, and predicted that his descendants would go into captivity to Babylon. (2 Kings xx. 12-19; Isa. xxxix.; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.)

In B.C. 711 the Assyrians again invaded Palestine, took Ashdod, laid waste the 'broad fields of Judah', and in the following year deposed Merodach-Baladan.

Sennacherib.

Sargon died in July B.C. 705 and was succeeded by Sennacherib. As was almost invariably the case, the new king of Assyria had to prove that he possessed sufficient vigour to maintain the integrity of his empire. Revolts broke out on every side. Sennacherib first subdued Merodach-Baladan and his enemies in the east; but very dangerous signs of disaffection were in the meantime being manifested in Syria. Hezekiah, as a moving spirit, had persuaded Tyre, Zidon and the Egyptians to oppose the Assyrians. The little city states of Palestine were, however, no match for the disciplined armies of a mighty empire. Sennacherib's appearance in Syria was the signal for a general panic. Only Hezekiah,

supported by the Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Ekron, had the hardihood to oppose the invaders. But the Assyrian army was irresistible, and advanced along the coast, plundering Ashkelon on its way. (2 Kings xviii. 13.)

**Submission of
Hezekiah.**

The collapse of the rebels was complete. Hezekiah humbly sued for peace, but this was not granted till forty-six of his cities had been taken, more than two hundred thousand of his subjects led into captivity, and he himself shut in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage". It was only by abject submission and the payment of a very heavy tribute that Hezekiah saved his capital: his dominions being apportioned by Sennacherib among the kings he had set up in Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza.

The crowning day of humiliation came, when Sennacherib deigned to grant terms to Hezekiah. Isaiah saw in this shameful peace a Divine call to general mourning; but no sooner had the tension of suspense ceased, and the people learned that they were not to endure the horrors of a siege, than signs of joy were manifested on every side. A riotous festival succeeded the days of panic. *Behold*, cries Isaiah, *joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* (Isa. xxii. 12-14.)

**Hezekiah's
reforms.**

The hopeless collapse of Judah, both politically and morally, led directly to an attempt to reform the national religion. A general revival of sacrificial worship took place, which was inaugurated by Hezekiah's famous celebration of the Passover. (2 Chron. xxx.) A vigorous attack was made upon the Canaanitish worship; and even the brazen serpent made by Moses, which had become an object of idolatrous veneration known as the Nehushtan, was destroyed. (2 Kings xviii. 4.)

**Change in
Isaiah's
attitude
towards
Assyria.**

In these reforms, Hezekiah had the sympathy of Isaiah, who must have rejoiced at the spectacle of a monarch devoting himself to the religious improvement of his people. Perhaps the prophet shews his approval in his changed attitude towards the Assyrians. Hitherto Isaiah had depicted the invaders as the instruments of Divine vengeance on the sins of Israel. From this time forth, the prophet seems to lay emphasis upon the certainty of Assyria's overthrow, and to assure the people of the stability of the Davidic dynasty, of the inviolability of Jerusalem, and of the advent of the Messiah as a deliverer.

**Messianic
hopes.**

With the overthrow of Assyria, Isaiah pictures an Israel purified and refined by trial, entering upon a period of truth and justice under a glorified king of the house of David. He sees *Zion redeemed with righteousness*, the centre of a perfect kingdom taking the place of the violent and unjust empire of Assyria. The *shoot of the stock of Jesse* was to be endued with the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and might, that he might delight in the fear of Jehovah, and judge with equity the poor and meek of the earth. (Isa. xi. 1-9.)

**Army of
Sennacherib
before
Jerusalem.**

The biblical account of the retreat of Sennacherib is one of the most vividly dramatic narratives in the Old Testament. The escape of Jerusalem from destruction may justly be regarded as the crowning triumph of the religious reformation of the age of Hezekiah. (2 Kings xviii. 17—xix. 36; 2 Chron. xxxii.; Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii.) The great officers of Sennacherib, the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh (chief cup-bearer), appeared before Jerusalem at the head of an army, to demand the surrender of the city. They

came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. Hezekiah sent Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, with Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to meet the envoys of the Great King. The Rabshakeh, as spokesman, shewed himself to be an overbearing and insolent man, but at the same time possessed of a shrewd knowledge of the weak points of the character of the Judæans. He opened the discussion by asking what had induced Hezekiah to resist his master. Did he trust in Egypt? It was like trusting upon the staff of a bruised reed. . . . whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it. Did he trust in Jehovah? The Rabshakeh appealed to the disaffected party in Judah, who doubtless regarded Hezekiah as a sacrilegious fanatic for removing the ancient sanctuaries, and asked, *Is not that he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?*

**The Rabshakeh
addresses the
people.**

So ridiculous did it seem to an Assyrian official that the king of Judah should rely on his material resources, that he offered scornfully to wager that, if he gave Hezekiah two thousand horses, he could not find riders for them. The ministers of Hezekiah, afraid of the forcible effect of these taunts on the people, besought the Rabshakeh to speak in the Aramæan dialect, the diplomatic language of all Syria, and not to use the Jewish tongue; but the Assyrian officer was too astute to consent to this. He declared that he had been sent, not to Hezekiah, but to the people of Jerusalem, and with a loud voice offered terms to them. If they would, surrender they should all be at liberty to go back to their farms till the king of Assyria could find them a suitable territory in some other part of his dominions. At last,

forgetting that he had been posing as the ally of those who supported the ancient worship of Jehovah against the innovations of Hezekiah, the Rabshakeh reveals his contempt for the God of Israel, and asks, *Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? . . . have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?*

These blasphemies against their God Sennacherib's army smitten. evidently exasperated the people, but, in obedience to the king's command, they listened to them in sullen silence. Hezekiah sent Eliakim and Shebna with the elders of the priests to Isaiah, who exhorted them to be of good courage, for Jehovah would put a spirit in Sennacherib and cause him to hear a rumour, that he might return and fall by the sword in his own land. The Rabshakeh found his master at Libnah, awaiting the advance of Tirhakah, the Ethiopian king of Egypt. Having no spare troops to detach for the siege of Jerusalem, Sennacherib trusted to the effect of a violent letter to Hezekiah ordering him to surrender the place. In his despair the king spread the letter before Jehovah, and received from Isaiah the famous oracle against Sennacherib, beginning *The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn*, and ending with the words of Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, *He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mount against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah.* That very night the angel of Jehovah smote an hundred and eighty-five thousand of the invaders. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and

dwelt at Nineveh. Some years afterwards, in 681 B.C., he was slain by his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer. (Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii.; 2 Kings xviii., xix.)

SUMMARY.

- (1.) With the fall of Samaria, Judah came into prominence as the sole hope of the worshippers of the True God.
- (2.) Three of the saviours of the Faith of Israel at this critical time were Hezekiah the king, and the prophets, Micah of Moresheth Gath, and Isaiah.
- (3.) Hezekiah seems to have been at first inclined to a worldly policy; but, warned by his disasters, he turned to God, and allowed himself to be guided by Isaiah.
- (4.) He began by rebelling against Assyria, and contrary to the advice of Isaiah, trusted in *the broken reed* of Egypt.
- (5.) After a serious illness, from which he recovered, he plotted, with Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, against Assyria. This was probably the cause of Sargon's invasion in B.C. 711.
- (6.) After this Hezekiah seems to have followed the advice of Isaiah and to have reformed religion in Jerusalem.
- (7.) The invasion of Sennacherib followed in B.C. 701, and the Assyrian army was destroyed by *the Angel of the Lord*.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

II. Kings XXI.—XXV.

II. Chronicles XXXIII.—XXXVI.

Jeremiah I., VII., XXII., XXXV., XXXVI.

Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.

Manasseh. With the death of Hezekiah the party in favour of the semi-idolatrous worship reasserted itself. Manasseh, the new king, was only twelve years of age at his accession, and the opponents of Hezekiah's religious policy found in him a ready tool. For nearly sixty years the advocates of a purer worship of Jehovah were silenced and persecuted. According to tradition, Isaiah himself was one of the victims. (2 Kings xxi. 1-18; Heb. xi. 37.) The high places were restored, and the practice of burning children to Moloch again introduced. Idolatrous objects, such as altars to the *host of heaven* and *horses of the sun*, were multiplied in the Temple itself. The wickedness of Manasseh, whose reign extended over fifty-five years, is denounced in the strongest terms in the book of Kings. *He shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other; besides his sin whereby he made Judah to sin.* (2 Kings xxi. 16.) The Chronicler says that Manasseh was taken a captive to Babylon, where he repented and was restored (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11 ff.), but no hint of this is given in the book of Kings.

Literature of the period. Of the long reign of Manasseh we know little; but, if the voices of the prophets were silenced, their pens may well have been busy. In Proverbs mention is made of

the *men of Hezekiah* who copied out some of Solomon's sayings (Prov. xxv. 1); and those who survived their master may have prepared for the time when the cause of Jehovah would again prevail, by reinforcing the utterances of the prophets with a permanent religious literature.

The chief literary productions of this age were—perhaps the concluding chapters of Micah (vi.—vii.); the prophecy of the fall of Assyria by Nahum; and above all, Deuteronomy. The historical groundwork of this beautiful book is the ancient narrative of Israel's wandering in the Wilderness. The laws are those of the Book of the Covenant, enlarged and expanded to meet the needs of the age. The writer, or editor, took the laws of Moses as a basis of a discourse to the men of his own time, inculcating the duty of Israel to serve Jehovah for the love of Him, and denouncing the sin of idolatry and its inevitable punishment. Thus in the dark days of Manasseh preparation was made for a further and more durable reformation than that of Hezekiah.

Josiah. Manasseh's son Amon reigned but two years. He was succeeded by Josiah, a child of eight. The guardians of the young king favoured the prophetic party; and in the eighth year of his reign Josiah *began to seek the Lord*, and in the twelfth to suppress idolatry. (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.)

The discovery of the Book of the Law. During the reign of Josiah an invasion of Scythians, alluded to by both the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah, swept over Palestine. Jerusalem was spared, and this fact probably made Josiah and his ministers more zealous to honour Jehovah. When the Temple was restored, the high priest, Hilkiyah, announced that he had *found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord*. This was probably the book of Deuteronomy,

and the king was greatly distressed at the terrible denunciations of apostasy and its penalties. A prophetess named Huldah was consulted, and declared that the evil predicted would assuredly come upon Jerusalem, but not in the days of Josiah. (2 Kings xxii.)

Reformation by Josiah. Josiah now undertook a reformation far more thorough than that of Hezekiah.

On receiving Huldah's response, the newly-found book was read and a solemn covenant made. The Temple was purified of every trace of idolatry. The high places of Judah were destroyed, and their priests brought to Jerusalem and forbidden to sacrifice in the Temple, though they were allowed *to eat unleavened bread among their brethren*. Topheth, where the children were sacrificed, was defiled, and *the chariots of the sun* burned. All Solomon's sanctuaries were demolished; and Josiah's zeal extended to the ancient kingdom of Israel. At Bethel, Jeroboam's altar was polluted by the bones of the dead; only the sepulchre of the disobedient prophet, who had announced its ruin (1 Kings xiii. 2), was spared. On his return to Jerusalem, Josiah kept the Passover with great solemnity. (2 Kings xxiii. 1-25.) The permanent effect of this reformation was that Jerusalem was recognised as the one sanctuary at which sacrifices could legitimately be offered.

Death of Josiah. This reformation, owing to its hasty and violent methods, was only superficial; but it raised high hopes alike in

king and people, which soon proved delusive. In B.C. 608, Pharaoh-Necho was traversing the Plain of Esdraelon on his way to secure the important fortress of Carchemish on the Euphrates. Josiah, for some reason unknown, marched against him, and was utterly defeated at Megiddo. His death and the destruction of his army heralded the ruin of his people. Judah was now alter-

nately tributary to Egypt and to the new empire of Babylon.

**Rise of the
Chaldaeans:
and Babylon.**

The Assyrian Empire came to an end with the destruction of Nineveh by Nabopolassar in B.C. 607. Henceforward the Chaldaeans were the leading nation in the East; and in 605 the Egyptians were defeated on the Euphrates. Syria and Palestine now passed under the influence of Nebuchadrezzar the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.

**Josiah's
successors.**

Four kings reigned in Judah after Josiah. Jehoahaz, who was raised to the throne after the battle of Megiddo, reigned for but three months. Pharaoh-Necho then summoned him to Riblah, and sent him to exile in Egypt. His brother Eliakim was set up in his place, and his name changed to Jehoiakim. This king proved a contemptible tyrant, and he is denounced as such by the prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk, and in the books of Kings and Chronicles. His end is obscure; but he evidently offended Nebuchadrezzar, and all hope of support from Egypt was at an end. Jehoiakim's son Coniah, like Jehoahaz, reigned but three months. He was then taken captive to Babylon, where he was kept in confinement for thirty-eight years. With the king, Nebuchadrezzar deported all the flower of the people of Jerusalem; and the Babylonish Captivity dates from the reign of Jehoiachin, or Coniah, as he is also called. (2 Kings xxiv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi.; Jer. xxii.) Another son of Josiah, called Mattaniah, whose name was changed to Zedekiah, was set over the remnant.

Jeremiah.

The Prophet Jeremiah played an important part in the affairs of Judah during this period. He was a priest, a native of Anathoth in Benjamin. Though his tone is that of the book of Deuteronomy, he does not seem to have taken much

part in the reformation of Josiah, but to have seen from the first its hollowness. Unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah did not teach the inviolability of the Temple, but clearly foresaw that the religion of the future would be independent of external objects. He anticipates St. Paul in declaring that the law of the future would be written in the heart rather than on tables of stone. (Jer. xxxi. 33.) Even the *ark of the covenant* would be forgotten when men recognised the spiritual nature of the Law of God. (Jer. iii. 16.) Indeed, no one could be less sacerdotal than Jeremiah, who disparages even sacrifices, and denies that they were the important part of the legislation in the Wilderness. (Jer. vii. 22.) He considered the Temple to be no more safe from ruin than the ancient sanctuary of Shiloh had been in the days of Eli. (Jer. vii. 12-14.) The prophet sums up in a few sentences the reigns of the successors of Josiah, to whom he gives unstinting praise. He did *judgement and justice, and then it was well with him*. Very different was his unworthy son Jehoiakim, who *built his house by unrighteousness, . . . and used his neighbours' service without wages*. As for the unfortunate Jehoiachin, Jeremiah foretold that he would be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, to be led into captivity—never to return. (Jer. xxii.)

**Jeremiah and
the Return.**

But though he would allow of no delusion as to the certainty of the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity, Jeremiah had no doubt as to the ultimate return of the people to Jerusalem; and he even predicted that the duration of the exile would be seventy years. This hope of a return encouraged and supported the prophet in all his trials.

**Jeremiah and
Jehoiakim.**

The thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth chapters of Jeremiah relate two episodes in the reign of Jehoiakim. When the king of Babylon was ravaging the land, the Rechabites or

followers of Jehonadab, or Jonadab (2 Kings x. 15), took refuge in Jerusalem. By command of Jehovah, Jeremiah took them into the Temple and offered them wine. When they told him that Jehonadab 'their father' had forbidden this, and that they had strictly obeyed his commands, Jeremiah contrasted their loyalty with Israel's disregard of Jehovah, and declared in His name *Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever.*

In the following chapter Jeremiah prepared a roll containing Jehovah's denunciations against Israel, which his faithful scribe Baruch read to the people. When Jehoiakim read the roll he cut it with a penknife and burnt it, for which act of defiance of Jehovah his doom was foretold.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) Religious reaction under Manasseh and restoration of the high places.
- (2.) Manasseh's captivity and repentance.
- (8.) Reformation under Josiah. Discovery of the *Book of the Law in the House of the Lord.*
- (4.) Death of Josiah at Megiddo.
- (5.) Rise of the Chaldaean empire in Babylon.
- (6.) Josiah's descendants—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin.
- (7.) Jehoiachin taken to Babylon—beginning of the Captivity.
- (8.) Jeremiah—contrasted with Isaiah—predicts the Return. The Rechabites praised for their obedience; and the *roll of the book* destroyed by Jehoiakim.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTIVITY.

II. Kings XXIV.—XXV.

II. Chron. XXXVI.

Jeremiah XXXVIII.—XLIII.

Ezekiel.

The remnant in Judah. The captives led away with Jehoiachin were the princes, warriors and craftsmen of Jerusalem; those who remained are described as *the poorest sort of the people of the land*. A certain number of men of rank, including the Chief Priest and the prophet Jeremiah, were allowed to stay in Judah. Over these Nebuchadrezzar set up Zedekiah as king, after making him take an oath of allegiance of no ordinary solemnity. (Ezek. xvii. 12-14.) Jeremiah in relating a vision shews the contrast between the flower of the nation, which had been taken to Babylon, and the remnant left behind. He was shewn two baskets of figs: *the good figs very good, and the bad very bad; they cannot be eaten, they are so bad.* (Jer. xxiv. 3.)

Jeremiah and Zedekiah. From the beginning of Zedekiah's reign Jeremiah threw his whole influence on the side of fidelity to the covenant made with Nebuchadrezzar. He saw that herein lay the sole hope of saving the city. The fanatical prophets scorned the wise advice of their more experienced colleague. Hananiah, for example, solemnly foretold that within two years the Temple treasures would be restored, and the yoke of the king of Babylon be broken. (Jer. xxviii. 1-11.) An alliance with Egypt was eagerly advocated, and Jeremiah denounced as a traitor to his country.

In the midst of this ferment, Ezekiel, the captive priest and prophet, urged submission to Babylon as strongly as Jeremiah, declaring that the prophets of Judah *have seduced My people, saying Peace, and there was no peace.* (Ezek. xiii. 10.) Zedekiah seems to have been anxious to follow this wise advice, but his people were too strong for him, and he was forced to break his compact with Babylon and to ally himself with Egypt. (Ezek. xvii. 15 f.)

**Destruction of
Jerusalem.**

As a punishment for this perfidy, Nebuchadrezzar sent an army against Jerusalem, which was invested in January, B.C. 588, and taken and destroyed in July, B.C. 586. During the siege Jeremiah consistently advised submission, saying that those who remained in the city would assuredly be slain; but if any would surrender to the Chaldeans he would be spared, *and his life shall be unto him for a prey.* Such advice naturally caused him to be suspected by the party of resistance; but he was soon able to shew that he was a true patriot, who had not lost his trust in Jehovah, by buying a family estate at Anathoth for its full price. To the prophet the return from captivity was as certain as the imminent destruction of the city. (Jer. xxxii.)

**Jeremiah
imprisoned.**

Infuriated by his words, his enemies twice cast Jeremiah into prison, once into a loathsome dungeon, and the second time into an empty cistern, from whence he could only be drawn up by ropes. Zedekiah—who evidently meant well, but was under the control of his princes—procured the prophet's deliverance and gave him an allowance of bread during the siege.

**Jerusalem
taken.**

When the city was taken by assault, Zedekiah and his chosen warriors tried to escape, and were not overtaken till they reached the plains of Jericho. Zedekiah was taken

before Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah, his sons were slain before his eyes, and he was then blinded and led captive to Babylon, where he died. (Jer. xxxix. 1-7.) The Temple was burned and its treasures taken to Babylon; the walls of the city were destroyed, as well as the principal houses. Only the poorest were left to till the soil. (Jer. lii. 12-23.)

**Gedaliah and
the remnant.**

Jeremiah was treated with consideration, and was free to go to Babylon or stay in his own land. He chose the latter, and remained with the remnant, who were put under the charge of a man named Gedaliah. These settled at Mizpah, and, owing to an abundant season, seemed likely to prosper. But Gedaliah was murdered by Ishmael the son of Nethaniah; and the people, fearing the wrath of Nebuchadrezzar, fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. There we lose sight of them and of the prophet, who never ceased to rebuke their idolatry. (Jer. xl.—xliv.)

**The Jews in
Babylon.**

The exiled Jews do not appear to have been harshly treated, but to have been allowed much liberty in their new home. Many of them, if we may believe tradition, rose to posts of great influence under their new masters. The majority seem to have prospered, but there was always a minority of faithful souls, who could have no pleasure away from the Holy City. Their feelings are well expressed in the Psalm *By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept.* (Ps. cxxxvii.)

Ezekiel.

It took six months for the news of the fall of Jerusalem to reach Tel-Abib, the home of Ezekiel, the priest-prophet of the Captivity. Now begins the prophet's constructive work, which had such an abiding effect on later generations. In his famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, Ezekiel foretells the revival of the nation; and the concluding chapters of his book are devoted to a description of the restored Temple

at Jerusalem, and the services of the sanctuary, concluding with a description of the issuing forth from Jerusalem of the holy waters to cleanse and fertilise the land. The twelve tribes are to dwell on each side of the Temple, which is to be the centre of a restored Israel under the rule of a peaceful Prince. The last chapters of Ezekiel are considered by some to be the kernel of the later Priestly Law of the Jews. (Ezek. xl.—xlviii.)

Daniel.

The book of Daniel contains much that can only be attributed to the days of the Maccabean wars, and was probably written about B.C. 165. But it is a description of life in the days of the Captivity, and the writer is careful to shew how scrupulously the Jews observed their Law under the most trying conditions. Daniel and his companions, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego), steadily refuse to eat unclean food (Dan. i.), to worship idols (Dan. iii.), or to desist from regular prayer to the God of Israel (Dan. vi.), and are miraculously delivered from peril, whether it be the Fiery Furnace or the Den of Lions. The kings mentioned are Nebuchadrezzar, his son Belshazzar, Cyrus, and 'Darius the Median'. Of these only the first and third can be identified with any certainty. Belshazzar was, as we now know, not the son of Nebuchadrezzar, but of Nabonidus who was actually king when Babylon was taken by Cyrus.

Esther.

The strange story of the book of Esther, though it does not refer to the Babylonian Captivity, but to the Jews under the Persians, may be here alluded to as an example of the hostility of certain people to the nation, and the dangers to which it was exposed. It relates how Queen Esther, the Jewess, interceded on behalf of her people to Ahasuerus (Xerxes, B.C. 485-465), king of Persia, who

had been persuaded by Haman to give orders that they should be exterminated. At the instigation of Mordecai, her uncle, a Jewish councillor of the king, Esther braved her husband's displeasure, and obtained leave for her people to defend themselves. This curious story is told to account for the feast of Purim (*lots*), so called because Haman cast lots to decide when the Jews should be destroyed. It is remarkable that the name of God is not so much as mentioned in the whole book.

SUMMARY.

- (1.) Zedekiah is made king instead of Jehoiachin.
- (2.) Takes an oath to Nebuchadrezzar, but violates it by intriguing with Egypt.
- (3.) Jerusalem is besieged, and Jeremiah imprisoned for his advice to submit to the Chaldaeans.
- (4.) Capture of the city, B.C. 586.
- (5.) Jeremiah left behind with the remnant under Gedaliah at Mizpah.
- (6.) Murder of Gedaliah, and escape of people to Egypt.
- (7.) Ezekiel plans the laws of the restored community.
- (8.) Stories of the Captivity in the book of Daniel.
- (9.) Esther rescues the Jews by her intercession.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RETURN AND THE SETTLEMENT IN JUDAH.

II. Chronicles xxxvi. 22, 23.

Ezra.

Nehemiah.

Haggai.

Zechariah.

Malachi.

**Cyrus
founds the
Medo-Persian
Empire.**

The Chaldæan kingdom of Babylon came to an end in B.C. 538, in the reign of a king named Nabu-nahid (Gr. Nabonidus), who is not mentioned in the Bible, though his son Belshazzar is, as we have seen, called *the king of the Chaldeans* in the book of Daniel. Nabu-nahid had incurred the enmity of the priests and people of Babylon, and the city opened her gates to Cyrus, the founder of the Medo-Persian empire. In the later chapters of the book of Isaiah (xl.-lxvi.) we learn that the Jews looked upon Cyrus as their great deliverer, raised up by Jehovah to restore Jerusalem. The Persians, who abhorred idolatry almost as much as the Jews, had more points in sympathy with the exiled nation than the Babylonians; and in Isaiah, or the later prophet who wrote in his name, Jehovah *saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, who shall perform all my pleasure.* (Isa. xliv. 28.)

Edict permitting the return of the Jews. One of the first acts of Cyrus in Babylon was to issue the following edict: *Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of Heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.* (Ezra i. 2, 3.) The king further allowed the Jews to contribute to the furtherance of the work, and restored all the spoil of the Temple taken by Nebuchadrezzar.

The Return under Zerubbabel. Those who returned in the days of Cyrus were a minority of the settlers in Babylon, and consisted of those pious and patriotic souls who knew no happiness but in the service of their God. Their equipment was supplied by their wealthier brethren. The leaders were Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, and the High Priest, Joshua the son of Jozadak.

Setting up of the Altar. In the seventh month, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the festival on which Solomon had dedicated his Temple, the people *gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.* (Ezra iii. 1.) The feast was duly observed, the altar set up on its base, and henceforward the customary sacrifices prescribed by the Law were offered. It was not till the second year of the Return that the foundations of the Temple were laid with much solemnity, the priests blowing the silver trumpets, and the Levites of the sons of Asaph clashing their cymbals, and praising Jehovah in antiphonal song, *For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever towards Israel.* (Ezra iii. 11.) As the people shouted, the elders who had seen the old House wept, so that the people could

not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people. (Ezra iii. 13.)

No sooner had the work of building the Temple commenced than *the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin*, as the Samaritans are called in the book of Ezra, claimed a right to assist; for, said they, *We seek your God as ye do, . . . since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither.* (Ezra iv. 2.) This offer was refused in no gracious terms by Zerubbabel: *Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves will build unto the Lord, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus, king of Persia, commanded us.* (Ezra iv. 3.) Thus repulsed, the Samaritans and *the people of the land* became the bitter enemies of the restored community; and the Jews, disheartened, and perhaps suspected by the government, completely abandoned the work of rebuilding the Temple.

**Temple
completed
under Darius.**

In B.C. 521 Darius Hystaspis became king of Persia; and as he was thought to be friendly to the Jews, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began to urge upon Zerubbabel and Joshua the need of continuing the building of the Temple. But as no Temple could be erected without permission from the king of Persia, no sooner had the work recommenced, than the satrap Tattenai asked the Jews, *Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this wall?* (Ezra v. 3.) He agreed, however, to let them go on with their work until the pleasure of Darius should be known. As a decree of Cyrus was found in Ecbatana in Persia, which granted permission to the Jews to build the Temple at Jerusalem, Darius confirmed this edict and ordered Tattenai to do all in his power to encourage the work. The Second Temple was finished in the sixth year of

Darius, B.C. 516. In the month after its completion the Passover was celebrated with unusual solemnity. (Ezra vi. 15-18.)

**Sixty years of
silence.**

The Jewish community was under a governor, appointed either by the Great King or the satrap who ruled the province west of the Euphrates. The first governor was probably Zerubbabel, after whom the Davidic family seems to have lost its influence. Henceforward the governor was no longer a Jew, but a Persian official, who oppressed the people with very heavy taxes. But on the other hand they enjoyed complete religious freedom, with a considerable amount of self-government. With the disappearance of the power of the royal house the High Priest became the head of the Jewish community. Already the priesthood had begun to be regarded as the aristocracy; as we read of families who desired to be recognised as members, but could not prove their descent. According to the lists in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, over four thousand priests returned under Zerubbabel.

The Persian kings were, on the whole, well disposed to their Jewish subjects; but the one to whom the Jews of Palestine owed most was Artaxerxes Longimanus, a wise monarch who became the patron of Ezra and Nehemiah.

**The mission
and reforms
of Ezra.**

In B.C. 458, nearly eighty years after the Return and fifty-eight after the completion of the Temple, Ezra, a priest, armed with an edict from Artaxerxes, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the head of a considerable body of Jews.

This edict gave him full powers to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and to take the offerings of the king and his seven counsellors to the Temple, together with the freewill offerings of the priests and people. He

was also empowered to draw freely upon the royal treasury, to appoint judges, to teach the Law of God, and, if necessary, to punish disobedience with death. He bore no Persian title, but was styled *Priest and Scribe*. (Ezra vii. 11.)

After proclaiming a solemn fast, the expedition started. They reached Jerusalem some four months after their departure from Babylon, and after a rest of three days, presented their offerings, and made a solemn sacrifice for all Israel. They spent some time in presenting their credentials to the royal officers of the district, and in assisting the people to decorate the Temple. Ezra, however, soon discovered to his grief that the Jews had intermarried with the heathen. (Ezra ix. 1-3.) Whereupon a solemn assembly was held, a commission was appointed, and the foreign wives were put away. (Ezra x.)

**Possible
attempt to
rebuild the
walls of
Jerusalem.**

It is probable that at this time an attempt was made to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but was interrupted by the hostility of the surrounding peoples, possibly irritated by the repudiation of their daughters by their Jewish husbands. An appeal was made to Artaxerxes, who commanded the work to be stopped. His commands were executed with all the zeal of hatred. (Ezra iv. 23.) It appears as if at this time the gates of Jerusalem were burned and the walls demolished.

**Nehemiah
appointed
governor.**

Thirteen years after Ezra had left Babylon, Nehemiah, the cup-bearer to king Artaxerxes, encouraged by his master's sympathy, petitioned him to be allowed to go to Jerusalem, with the authority to procure from Asaph, *the keeper of the king's forest* (paradise), a supply of timber to restore the walls. Artaxerxes granted his request, made him a Tirshatha, or provincial governor and sent him to Jerusalem with an armed escort.

The rebuilding of the walls. On his arrival Nehemiah proceeded with caution, as he perceived he had powerful enemies in the persons of Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite, who not only headed the Samaritans, but were bound by family ties to some of the influential priests in Jerusalem. He therefore made a survey of the city walls by night, and next day revealed to the assembled people the authority he had received from Artaxerxes, and invited them to rebuild the walls. With one accord the people cried, *Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work.* (Nehem. ii. 11-18.) So great was the earnestness with which this great enterprise was carried out, that in fifty-two days Jerusalem was once more a fortified city. (Nehem. vi. 15.)

Opposition to Nehemiah. The work was opposed by Sanballat and Tobiah, who charged the people with sedition; and when the circuit of the wall was built up to half its height, they appeared before the city with a mixed army of Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites. Nehemiah thereupon maintained a constant guard with his household troops, closed the gates at night, and armed the workmen. His foes then tried to produce sedition in the city itself by means of their supporters in Jerusalem, but were outwitted by the courage and astuteness of the governor.

Meanwhile scarcity of provisions and high prices caused the poor to complain of the heavy usury charged by the rich. Nehemiah put an end to the state of affairs by forbidding the practice of usury, and of selling the insolvent as slaves. (Nehem. v. 1-13.)

Repeopling of Jerusalem. When the gates were set up, there were very few houses, still fewer inhabitants, and the position was so dangerous that the gates were never opened till long after

sunrise. Nehemiah consequently provided inhabitants for the city by the selection by lot of one out of every ten of the Jewish families in the neighbourhood to settle within the walls. A certain number of their own free will left their homes to dwell in Jerusalem, and were deemed worthy of special commendation. (Nehem. vii. 4, xi. 1-2.)

Nehemiah's consideration for the people. Nehemiah shewed his sympathy with the poverty of the Jews by refusing to accept the allowance usually exacted by the governor, and by daily entertaining one hundred and fifty of the people at his own table. (Nehem. v. 14-19.) Assisted by Ezra, he directed the ceremony of the dedication of the walls, and provided for the due maintenance of the ministers of the Temple. He insisted on a rigid observance of the Sabbath, and waged unrelenting war against mixed marriages.

His recall. In B.C. 433 he was recalled to Shushan, and on his return found that Eliashib, the High Priest, had established his old adversary, Tobiah, in one of the chambers of the Temple, and had allowed his grandson to marry Sanballat's daughter. Nehemiah cast the furniture of Tobiah out of the Temple, and drove Eliashib out of Jerusalem for having *profaned the priesthood*. (Nehem. xiii. 7-8.)

The reading of the Law. Between B.C. 445 and 432 a religious ceremony took place which explains Nehemiah's zeal for the reformation of the Temple and the priesthood.

At the beginning of the seventh month, when all the people were assembled to celebrate the religious festivities at Jerusalem, Ezra, in obedience to the popular demand, brought forth the Book of the Law of Moses, and read it to the congregation in *the broad place that was before the water gate*. (Nehem. viii. 1-3.)

Ezra delivered the Law from a wooden pulpit, around which the Levites stood and interpreted it to the people, who were conscience-stricken, and broke out into loud lamentations. But Ezra restrained them, saying it was a day for rejoicing, for God's will had been revealed to His people. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.* (Nehem. viii. 10.) On the second day the feast of Tabernacles was observed by the people dwelling in booths (Lev. xxiii. 42) as they had not done *since the days of Joshua the son of Nun.* (Neh. viii. 17.)

Two days later a fast, not unlike that of the Day of Atonement (which however preceded the Feast of Tabernacles), was held, and the seed of Israel, having formally separated itself from all strangers, made a humble confession of national sin. Finally the whole people agreed to enter into a solemn compact, in which they bound themselves to observe the Law of Moses, not to intermarry with the heathen, not to traffic on the Sabbath, to keep the Sabbatical year, to pay a poll tax of one-third of a shekel to maintain the service of the Temple, and to give first-fruits and tithes.

A new Era. The promulgation of the Law is a fitting conclusion to the story of the Old Covenant, as with it a new period of religious history begins. The Law of God, instead of being the property of a priestly caste, became accessible to all who desired to know it. The Old Dispensation had ceased, and Malachi, the last of the old prophets, sets his seal on it in words that foretold that the prophetic dispensation would be revived by the sending of Elijah to prepare the nation *before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.* (Mal. iv. 5.)

SUMMARY.

(1.) CYRUS

- (a) takes Babylon and founds the Medo-Persian empire, B.C. 538.
- (b) Allows the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple.

(2.) RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL.

- (a) Altar set up.
- (b) Foundations of the Temple laid.
- (c) *Adversaries of Judah and Benjamin* offer to assist, and are repulsed.
- (d) Rebuilding of the Temple stopped.

(3.) COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE.

- (a) Haggai and Zechariah urge Zerubbabel to build.
- (b) Building commenced, and hindered by the adversaries of the Jews.
- (c) Cyrus' decree found at Achmetha.
- (d) Temple completed, sixth year of Darius, B.C. 516.

(4.) SIXTY YEARS SILENCE.

(5.) ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS, B.C. 465-424.

- (a) Mission of Ezra, B.C. 458.
- (b) Nehemiah governor B.C. 445—Walls rebuilt.
- (c) Nehemiah and Ezra promulgate the Law.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE.

Situation of Palestine.

Palestine, called the Land of Canaan in Genesis, and *Syria Palestinê* by the Greeks, is the southern part of the strip of cultivated territory along the shores of the Mediterranean from Asia Minor to the frontiers of Egypt. It has always been important as the highway between Egypt and the great trade centres of the East. Consequently many peoples have struggled to possess the land, and it has been inhabited by many different races. From the earliest times down to quite recent days Palestine has been the scene of great military expeditions and eventful battles. It was the route of such conquerors as Sennacherib, Alexander the Great, and Napoleon; and in all ages has been regarded as a high-road for armies.

General features of the Land.

Palestine is a hilly country with every variety of climate and vegetation. The valley of the Jordan is tropical; in the north and on the coast the land is suitable for the cultivation of corn; central Palestine is famous for its vineyards; the southern district is pastoral rather than agricultural. In the north is the snow-capped mountain of Hermon; on the east the forests of Bashan and the high pasture lands of Gilead. The land is shut in by the range of Lebanon in the north, the Mediterranean on the west, and the Desert on the south and east.

Differences in altitude.

A glance at the map will shew how rugged and difficult the country is. From Jerusalem to Jericho, for example, a distance of seventeen miles, the descent is from about

2500 feet above sea level to nearly a thousand feet below. In Western Palestine the altitude in the southern ridge is from 3000 ft. to 2500 ft., and the Maritime Plain is reached by a series of passes, many of which were scenes of battles. The central district, which from the western plain has the appearance of a single mountain, is known as Mount Ephraim, and forms a plateau a little lower than that of Judah and Benjamin. The valley of Esdraelon or Jezreel, through which the road to Damascus passes, is broken by hills like the Mounts Tabor and Gilboa; and, as it sinks towards the Jordan, falls below sea level, the lake of Galilee being more than 600 ft., and the Dead Sea 1300 ft., below the Mediterranean.

Throughout their history in Palestine the Israelites were mountaineers. On their entry into the land they gained possession of the hills, and it was only gradually that they obtained a footing in the plains. The Syrians said of them, *Their gods are gods of the hills*. (1 Kings xx. 23.) Nearly every Hebrew town can be described as *a city set on an hill*. (Matth. v. 14.) The great districts of inland Palestine are called Mount Judah, Mount Ephraim, and Mount Naphtali. Almost all sanctuaries were situated on mountain tops, and Mount Zion is the common designation of the Temple. But in Palestine proper the height of the hills scarcely gives them the dignity of mountains, as no summit rises much above 3000 ft. The only real mountains, Lebanon and Hermon, lie outside the Israelite territory. But these are everywhere visible, especially Hermon, which was known as Sirion (the breastplate). Its snowy summit is a conspicuous feature, and is seen even from Jerusalem. (Ps. xxix. 6.) The strength of Jerusalem consists in its being protected by its crags and deep ravines. The

Different
features of the
Land:

(a) Mountains;

most noteworthy mountains in Western Palestine are Tabor, the rallying place of the northern tribes (Deut. xxxiii. 19; Judg. iv. 6); Ebal and Gerizim, the scene of the reading of the Law (Josh. viii. 30-35), which are north and south of the city of Shechem; and Mount Gilboa, the scene of Saul's defeat by the Philistines. (1 Sam. xxxi.).

(b) **Rivers,** Syria is intersected by water-courses, but few of these are rivers in our sense of the word. They are mountain torrents, full during the heavy rains but soon dry. The only real river is the Jordan, which flows for almost a hundred miles below the level of the sea, an unique phenomenon in this world. The other rivers of Palestine are rather torrents. Such are the Kishon, which flows through the plain of Megiddo, a diminutive stream in summer, which floods the country in time of rain (Judg. v. 21); the Jabbok, after crossing which Jacob wrestled with the Angel at Penuel (Gen. xxxii. 22-32); and the Arnon, which marked the boundary of Israel and Moab. The two latter streams are in Eastern Palestine.

(c) **Valleys and Plains;** The most famous valleys are (1) the Plain of Megiddo or Esdraelon; (2) the Plain of Jordan; (3) the Philistine Plain; (4) Sharon.

(1) The Plain of Megiddo is the rich corn country watered by the Kishon and extending from the Jordan to Mount Carmel. Part of it, *i.e.* the valley in which the city of Jezreel stood on the way down to the Jordan, is below sea level. It was the scene of numerous battles in the Bible, such as the victory over Sisera (Judg. iv.—v.), and the battle of Megiddo, where Josiah fell (2 Kings xxiii. 29).

(2) The plain of Jordan is the deep and narrow depression, below sea level, through which

the river flows. The climate is tropical; the soil, extremely fertile when the rains fall, is sterile during the long dry season. The river is very winding, and its banks are covered by thickets of cane, the hiding places of wild beasts. Near the Dead Sea the country becomes a desert, which in the Revised Version is called the *Arabah*.

- (3) The Philistine Plain lies along the southern coast of Palestine, and gradually rises towards the mountains of Judah. It is approached from the east by several passes, the possession of which was eagerly disputed by the Philistines and Israelites. The best known of these were at Ajalon and Beth-horon. The country where the hills slope down to the plain was known as the *Shephelah*.

- (4) Sharon is the district between the country of the Philistines and Mount Carmel. The northern part was well wooded, and the whole district is famous for its flowers and its excellent pasturage.

(d) **Roads and
Passes.**

At the present time there are two railways in Palestine; one from Haifa, just north of Mount Carmel, which crosses the Jordan on the way to Damascus, and the other from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Both of these shew where the Western Israelite territory was most accessible. The road to Damascus follows the course of the Kishon and traverses the plain to Jezreel, whence it descends to the Jordan by Bethshan, where the Philistines took the body of Saul and his sons after the battle of Mount Gilboa. (1 Sam. xxxi. 10.) On crossing the Jordan it turns northward along the Sea of Galilee. The southern line passes through the Philistine country, and on reaching the hills almost

follows the route the Ark took when it had been captured and restored by the Philistines. (1 Sam. v.—vi.) It skirts Zorah, passes Beth-shemesh and Kiriath-jearim, and reaches Jerusalem by the Valley of Rephaim, where the Philistines had come up to attack David's new capital. (2 Sam. v. 22.) The military history in the Old Testament is seen to depend on the passes by which the country was approached. The highlands of Benjamin, for example, were entered from the west by the pass of Beth-horon, and from the east by way of the Valley of Achor, Michmash, and Ai. Both in the days of Joshua and Saul these were the scenes of severe fighting. (Josh. vii.—viii.; 1 Sam. xiii.—xiv.)

We take Western Palestine from
Great Divisions:

(a) **Northern;** north to south. The northern district does not play a very important part in Old Testament history. It was occupied by the tribes of Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar. The district is best known to us as Galilee, and practically covers the whole of Northern Palestine. The name signifies a circuit, and is from the same root as Gilgal and Golgotha, meaning 'to be round'. Galilee (Hebrew *Gālīl*) is found in Joshua xx. 7, 1 Kings ix. 11, Isaiah ix. 1, and 1 Chr. vi. 76. Isaiah calls it Galilee of the Gentiles; in 1 Macc. v. 15 it is styled Galilee of the aliens (*ἀλλοφύλων*). The country is well watered and very fertile, producing olives in abundance as well as corn. The inhabitants were hardy and courageous. Issachar, Naphtali, and Zebulun are in Judges v. 15, 18, praised for their bravery. The most important towns in Upper Galilee were Kedesh-Naphtali, Cabul (1 Kings ix. 13), and Abel-beth-Maachah (2 Sam. xx. 15); in lower Galilee, Megiddo, Taanach, and Jezreel. The tribe of Dan, after having been assigned a territory in Central Palestine, made a settlement at the source

of the Jordan. (Judg. xviii. 27-31.) Their city was the northern boundary of Israel, and was a famous sanctuary. In later days it became a Greek city called Paneas.

(b) **Central;** The central district of Palestine was the home of the great Joseph tribes, and was known in the days of the New Testament as Samaria. It extends from the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon to the highlands of Benjamin. It is the scene of many of the most important events in Old Testament history, and is the very heart of Israelite territory. The part assigned to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim in the south and Manasseh in the north, is exceptionally fertile, the vale of Shechem being described as a veritable garden. Corn, olives, and vines are the principal products, and this district is watered by numerous springs. The vineyards are described by Isaiah as *the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim* (Is. xxviii. 1), and the wealth of the land is the subject of the eulogy of the poet and the denunciation of the prophet. Joseph is spoken of by Jacob as *a fruitful bough* (Gen. xlix. 22), and by Moses as *the firstling of a bullock* (Deut. xxxiii. 17). To the south lay the highlands of Benjamin, whose border extended to Jerusalem. Small as this tribe was, it was always important, because it controlled the passes which led to the *Shephelah* on the west and to Jericho on the east. Shechem, the ancient capital of Israel, was in Ephraim, the one portion (Sept., *a chosen Shechem*) which Jacob gave to his beloved son Joseph (Gen. xlviii. 22.) Further down the vale of Shechem was Samaria (Shomeron, the watch-tower) guarding the maritime plain on which it looked. Shiloh, the resting place of the Ark, and Bethel, the sanctuary of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 29 ff.), with sacred associations dating from the remote past,

are alone sufficient to shew the importance of the inheritance of Joseph.

(c) **Southern;** Very different to the fertile Mount Ephraim is the more desolate district which fell to the lot of the *lion* tribe of Judah. It is a country of round and somewhat featureless hills, in many places suffering from great want of water, and shading off into the desert. One characteristic is its numerous caves. But it must not be supposed that it is entirely devoid of fertile spots. Hebron, standing higher than the rest, was famous for its vineyards, and Judah is described by Jacob as *washing his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes*. (Gen. xlix. 11.) The cities are as a rule built on hill tops, and were evidently more numerous than at present. The springs of water in this district were always the subject of keen rivalry. (Gen. xxvi. 19-25; and see Josh. xv. 18 ff.; Judg. i. 14 ff.) The wealth of its inhabitants consisted in their flocks. (1 Sam. xxv. 2.) The southern district, called *the South* in the English Bible, is known in Hebrew as the 'Negeb' or dry country. The chief cities were Hebron the ancient capital, Bethlehem, Beersheba the southern boundary of the land, and Jerusalem. The latter stands on hills divided by the valley of Hinnom on the west, of the Kedron on the east, and what Josephus calls the Tyropœon, or cheese makers' quarter, in the centre. It is surrounded by higher eminences, so that the Psalmist can say with justice *the mountains are round about Jerusalem*. (Ps. xxv. 2.)

(d) **Eastern.** As Western Palestine is divided into Mount Naphtali, Mount Ephraim, and Mount Judah, so the east is called Mount Gilead. This forms the frontier of the desert, and the tribe of Gad, who dwelt there, were renowned warriors. The country is a plateau broken by watercourses, like Judah,

but far more fertile. The chief towns of Gilead were Mahanaim, Succoth, Penuel, Jabesh-Gilead, and Ramoth-Gilead. The southern part of the country extending to the Arnon was assigned by Moses to Reuben; but the territory of this tribe formed a debateable land alternately Israelite and Moabite. The rivers of Gilead are the Hieromix (not mentioned in the Bible), the Jabbok, and Arnon, the two former flowing into the Jordan and the last-named into the Dead Sea. North of Gilead is Bashan, the kingdom of Og, conquered by the Manassites. The district was renowned for its oak forests, and its celebrated cattle. The chief town was Edrei.

The Israelites shared the territory they occupied with the Canaanites. These Nations surrounding Israel: were reckoned as seven nations, though both their names and number vary. The (a) Canaanites, Amorites, &c.; most important were the Canaanites and the Amorites. The last-named are generally connected in the Bible with the east and south. Their name implies that they lived on the mountains, while the Canaanites inhabited the plains. The Canaanites inhabited the lands along the coast of the Mediterranean, and their great cities were Tyre and Zidon. They were known to the Greeks as Phœnicians, and were akin to the Carthaginians, whom the Romans call Poeni. In the days of the Judges the Canaanites, having horses and chariots, kept the Israelites confined to the mountains.

(b) Philistines; South of the Canaanites was the country of the bold and enterprising Philistines, who, like the Israelites, were not natives of Palestine, but immigrants. Amos says they came from Caphtor. (Amos ix. 7.) They had five great cities: Ashdod, Askelon, Gaza, Gath, and Ekron. They were organised as a confederacy under five lords. Their god, Dagon, is supposed by some to be a fish deity; but the

more prevalent theory is that he was really a patron of agriculture, and that his name means not 'fish', but 'corn'. The Philistines were more probably farmers than fishermen and sailors. Their sea coast towns, like Askelon, were not good harbours.

(c) **Moab and Ammon;** Some of the surrounding nations, like Moab and Ammon on the south-east, were akin to Israel; these two tribes claiming descent from Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Moab proper was a very small district south of the Arnon, but though part is desert there are very fertile spots in it, and it may well have supported a large population. The Moabites advanced north of the Arnon, where many of their towns were situated. The Ammonites' territory was probably east of Moab and bordered on the deserts.

(d) **Edom;** Israel's brother was Esau or Edom, who gave his name to the territory south of the Dead Sea. The Land of Edom stretched from the Dead Sea to the eastern branch of the Red Sea, and was also known as Mount Seir. Its capital was Sela, better known as Petra, the wonderful rock city, much of which is literally carved out of the living rock. The Edomites were a fierce tribe, and after the Captivity the bitterest enemies of Israel. They encroached on the tribe of Judah from the south and almost pushed as far north as Jerusalem. In New Testament times the country south of Judæa was known as Idumea or Edom.

(e) **Syria.** The Syrians or Aramæans were akin to Israel, and their earliest home was Haran (Gen. xi. 31; xxiv. 10), or according to Amos, Kir. (Amos ix. 7.) Mesopotamia in Hebrew is called 'Aram of the Two Rivers'. There are several Syrian tribes mentioned in the Bible, but in the books of Kings the Syrians are those of Damascus. These were for centuries the chief rivals of Israel after its disruption from Judah.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LIGHT THROWN ON THE HISTORY OF THE HEBREWS BY RECENT DISCOVERIES.

The great subject of the illustration of facts recorded in the Bible by the revelation of the monuments of antiquity can only be dealt with in such a manner as to give the student a glimpse of what has been done in recent years.

EGYPT.

From Egypt itself we learn something of the relations of Israel with the venerable civilization of the country.

Tombs of Beni-Hassan. There is an inscription with pictures in the tombs of Beni-Hassan belonging to the twelfth dynasty, shewing how a tribe of Arabs with presents visited an Egyptian governor, as the sons of Jacob visited Joseph. This, however, was more than a thousand years before the days of Jacob.

Tel-el Amarna. Amen-hotep IV., a king of the eighteenth dynasty, married a Mesopotamian princess and adopted her religion. He built a city, which was destroyed after his death. In 1887 it was discovered that the place contained a number of clay tablets written in the Babylonian wedge-shaped characters. These refer to the state of Palestine, which was then under Egyptian control. There are letters from Tyre, Sidon, Lachish, Askelon, Gaza, and Jerusalem. The last-named place is called Uru-salim. The country at this time, in the fifteenth century B.C., was being invaded by the Chabiri (confederates). Some suppose these were Hebrews.

Rameses II. From the fact that the Israelites built the store cities Pithom and Raamses, it has been supposed that Rameses II., who reigned for sixty-seven years in the thirteenth century B.C., was the Pharaoh of the Oppression. The site of Pithum has been discovered near Tel-el-Kebir. It was built to contain great granaries for corn. It is said that some of the bricks were made *without straw*. (Ex. v. 10.)

Etele of Meremptah. The Pharaoh of the Exodus is thought to be Meremptah II., the son and successor of Rameses II. He engaged in a war with Syria, and on the stele or column erected by him the Israelites are mentioned. This is the earliest mention of them on any monument—about 1200 B.C. or earlier.

Shishak. The first king of Egypt mentioned by name in the Bible is Shishak, who invaded Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam. (1 Kings xiv. 25-28.) He plundered the Temple at Jerusalem; but though he mentions various cities in Palestine as taken by him, he does not refer to this incident on his inscription.

BABYLONIA.

By Babylonia is meant the country between the Tigris and Euphrates, just to the north of the Persian Gulf. The Hebrews called it *the land of Shinar*. (Gen. xi. 2.) Here was a civilization as old as that of Egypt. Its records were in a language somewhat akin to Hebrew, written in cuneiform or wedge-shaped characters on bricks, an immense number of which have been found and deciphered.

Creation Tablets. At Nineveh the account of the Creation was found in the library of Asshur-banipal, king of Assyria (B.C. 668-626). These are copies of very much earlier tablets, probably about 2000 B.C. They relate how the world was made after a

long strife between the gods and the Great Deep (Tiāmat, Hebrew *Tehom*). When Marduk, or Merodach, conquers Tiamat he creates the world. There is a second account of creation, discovered at Sippara in Babylonia, A.D. 1882.

The Flood.

The Babylonian stories of both the Flood and the Creation bear very striking resemblance to the narratives in Genesis. The Flood story relates how Gilgamesh was saved in a ship. Like Noah, he sent forth a raven and a dove, but also a swallow, and offered sacrifice when he came out of the ark.

ASSYRIA.

The Assyrians lived to the north of Babylonia, and their capital was Nineveh on the river Tigris. They first came into contact with Israel in the ninth century B.C. They used the cuneiform character of the Babylonians, and mention many of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Mention of Ahab and Jehu.

In the British Museum there are two inscriptions of Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria. One tells how the king of Damascus, with his allies, among whom was Ahab, was defeated in B.C. 854. The other (the Black Obelisk) shews the envoys of Jehu the 'son of Omri' making offerings as subjects of Shalmaneser.

Fall of Samaria.

The later kings of Israel (Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea) are mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions, and Sargon II. relates how Samaria was taken in B.C. 722. Only twenty-eight thousand people were taken captive on this occasion.

Expedition of Sennacherib.

The story of Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, invading Judah is found on the Taylor Cylinder, now in the British Museum. This king says that he took 200,000 people of Judah captive and shut Hezekiah in his city "like a bird in a cage". Hezekiah paid an immense ransom,

but Jerusalem was not taken. This invasion took place B.C. 701.

DISCOVERIES IN PALESTINE.

Remarkably few traces of the Israelites have been found in Palestine, though the excavations throw much light on the history of the Bible.

Moabite Stone. The Moabite Stone was discovered in 1868, and is an inscription made by Mesha (2 Kings iii. 4-5) to commemorate his victories over Israel. He says that as long as Omri reigned Israel oppressed Moab, but in the days of his son, Chemosh, the god of Moab, saved the nation and enabled Mesha to recapture the Moabite cities. The language is Hebrew and resembles that of the books of Kings.

Siloam Inscription. The Siloam inscription describes the making of a tunnel to bring water into Jerusalem, probably in the days of Hezekiah. (2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 30.) It is written in antique Hebrew characters like the Moabite Stone.

Gezer. The site of Gezer, a city nineteen miles north-west of Jerusalem, was discovered in 1874, and excavations have been going on there since 1902. It was the place which Pharaoh gave to Solomon as the marriage portion of his daughter. (1 Kings ix. 16.) The remains of no less than seven cities have been discovered; the earliest certainly older than 2000 B.C. The high place and the pillars found here illustrate the worship of the Canaanite period, and there are undoubted traces of human sacrifices. Images of Ashtoreth have been discovered, and there are signs of Egyptian occupation.

Jericho. The walls of Jericho have been discovered, and it seems evident that when the Canaanite city fell, it lay desolate for a considerable

period before another town was built on its ruins. This confirms the Biblical story that the city was destroyed by Joshua and not rebuilt before the days of Ahab.

Taanach. Taanach near Megiddo has been the scene of the most recent excavation, and, like Gezer, is full of indications of Canaanite idolatry. The worship of Ishtar was practised here. A most interesting incense altar has been discovered, with heads carved on it which are supposed to represent Cherubim. Here also there are several indications of human sacrifice.

THE PAPYRI FOUND AT ELEPHANTINE.

Much light has been thrown on Jewish life in Egypt in the fifth century B.C. by the discovery of a number of family papers at Elephantine on the first cataract of the Nile. These are dated carefully, the earliest B.C. 471 and the latest 411. We learn that the Jews had a temple in Upper Egypt, which was spared when Cambyses destroyed the native temples in B.C. 525. The sons of Sanballat, the enemy of Nehemiah, are mentioned, as is also the Jewish High Priest, Jehohanan.

TABLES.

END OF TABLES

1. THE DESCENDANTS OF TERAH AND ABRAHAM.
2. FESTIVALS.
3. SACRIFICES.
4. KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.
5. IMPORTANT PRIESTS AND PROPHETS.
6. DATES IN ASSYRIAN, BABYLONIAN, AND
PERSIAN HISTORY.

TABLE I.

DESCENDANTS OF TERAH, SHEWING THE NATIONS AKIN TO THE ISRAELITES.

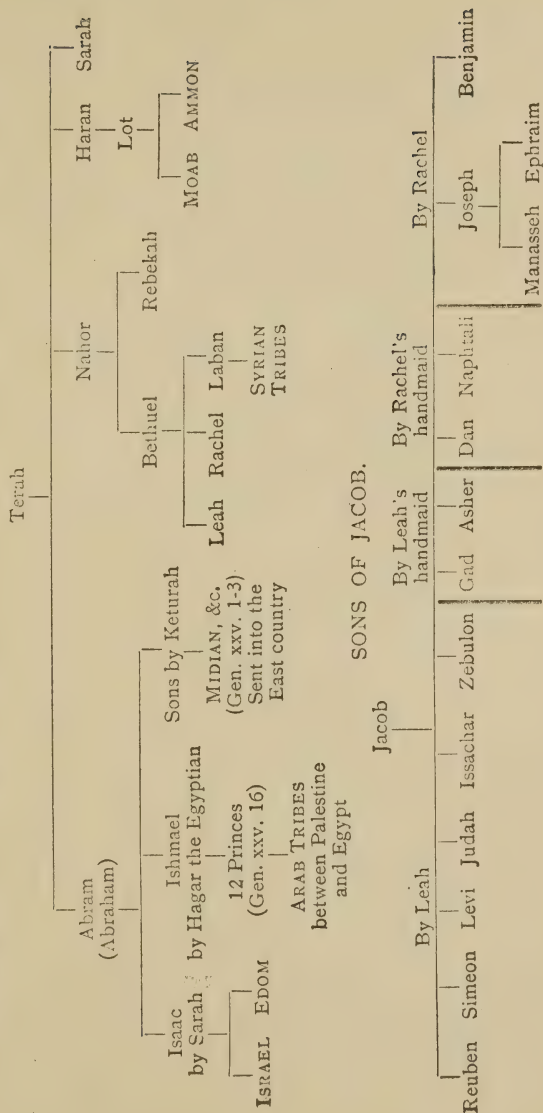


TABLE II.

THE CHIEF FESTIVALS AND HOLY SEASONS.

The *civil* year began in the autumn, the *religious* in the spring. The months, when numbered, are calculated from the first of the religious year. The three great festivals are—*Passover*, in the first month; *Weeks*, in the third; *Tabernacles*, in the seventh.

- I. The *Passover* is connected with the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*. It consisted of a family sacrifice of a lamb or a kid, which was eaten by each household to commemorate the coming forth from Egypt. The laws of the *Passover* are to be found in Ex. xii. 1-51; xiii. 3-10; xxiii. 14-19; xxxiv. 18-26; Numb. ix. 1-14; xxviii. 16 f.; Deut. xvi. 1-6. The *Feast of Unleavened Bread* marked the commencement of the wheat harvest. (Lev. xxiii. 4-14.)
- II. The *Feast of Weeks*, called Pentecost (Acts ii. 1), was seven weeks or fifty days after the *Passover* (Ex. xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 15; Deut. xvi. 10.) The *Feast of Weeks* marked the conclusion of the harvest. In later Judaism it celebrated the giving of the Law.
- III. The seventh month is the holy month in the calendar. It is marked by three holy days:—
 - (a) The *Feast of Trumpets*, or the New Year. (Lev. xxiii. 24.)
 - (b) The *Day of Atonement*. (Lev. xvi. 1-34; xxiii. 27-32.)
 - (c) The *Feast of Tabernacles*. (Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 34-36, 39-43; Numb. xxix. 12-31; Deut. xvi. 13-15; xxxi. 10-13.)

At the *Feast of Tabernacles*, or booths, the people dwelt in booths to commemorate the sojourning in the Wilderness. It is also called the *Feast of Ingathering*, because it was at the end of the vintage.

The sacred seasons were regulated by the number *seven*: the seventh day (Sabbath), seventh month, seventh year (Sabbatical, Ex. xxiii. 10-11; Lev. xxv. 2-7; Deut. xv. 1-18); seventh seventh year (Jubilee, Lev. xxv. 8-16, 23-55; xxvii. 16-25).

TABLE III.

SACRIFICES, ETC.

There were five different kinds of sacrifices offered by the Hebrews: *Peace offerings*, *Burnt offerings*, *Sin offerings*, *Trespass offerings*, and *Meat* (R.V. *Meal*) *offerings*.

As some of these are alluded to in the New Testament, it is very important to understand their significance. The main idea in a *Peace offering* was that of communion; part of the sacrifice was burned and the rest eaten by the sacrificer. God therefore in a sense joined in the sacrifice. In the Pentateuch the LXX translate it *θυσία σωτηρίου*.

The *Burnt offering* was a sacrifice of dedication. The whole victim was burned on the altar. Such was the 'daily sacrifice'. When *Peace offerings* were made a *Burnt offering* was often an accompaniment.

Sin offerings implied that the relation between God and the worshipper was broken by sin or by ceremonial uncleanness, and needed renewal. The blood was smeared on the *horns of the altar*. Such were the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. The LXX translate it by *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* or *ἁμαρτία*. (See 2 Cor. v. 21.)

Trespass offerings are like *Sin offerings*, except that they always included the idea of making restitution or payment for the wrong done.

The *Meat offering* was the unbloody sacrifice. It was an offering like corn, oil, salt, and incense. It was never made with a *Sin offering*, but always with a *Peace offering*.

TABLE IV.

KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

<i>Judah.</i>	<i>Kings of All Israel.</i>	<i>Israel.</i>
David at Hebron, 7 years	Saul	Ishbosheth at Mahanaim, 7 years
	David, 33 years Solomon, 40 years	
<i>Judah.</i>	<i>Israel.</i>	
Rehoboam, 17 years	Jeroboam, 26 years	House of Omri
Abijam, 3 years	Nadab, 2 years	
Asa, 41 years	Baasha, 24 years	
	Elah, 2 years	
	Zimri, 7 days	
	Omri, 12 years	
Jehoshaphat, 25 years	Ahab, 22 years	
	Ahaziah, 2 years	
Joram, 8 years	Jehoram, 12 years	
Ahaziah, 1 year		
Athaliah (Queen) began to reign same year as Jehu. 7 years	Jehu, 28 years	House of Jehu
Joash, 40 years	Jehoahaz, 17 years	
Amaziah, 29 years	Jehoash, 16 years	
Azariah (or Uzziah), 52 years	Jeroboam II., 41 years	
	Zechariah, 6 months	
	Shallum, 1 month	
	Menahem, 10 years	
Jotham, 16 years	Pekahiah, 2 years	
Ahaz, 16 years	Pekah, 20 years	
Hezekiah, 29 years	Hoshea, 9 years	
(Fall of Samaria, 6th year of Hezekiah)	(Samaria taken B.C. 722)	
Manasseh, 55 years		
Amon, 2 years		
Josiah, 31 years		
Jehoahaz, 3 months		
Jehoiakim, 11 years		
Jehoiachin, 3 months		
(The Captivity begins)		
Zedekiah, 11 years		
(Jerusalem taken and destroyed)		

This chronology presents many difficulties, but the following points may be noted. Jeroboam and Rehoboam presumably began to reign in the same year; and when Jehu and Athaliah destroyed the houses of Ahab and David, their first regnal year is the same. Yet there is a discrepancy in the duration of the total reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel from Rehoboam and Jeroboam to the death of Jehoram and Ahaziah, and a far more serious one between Jehu and Athaliah and the fall of Samaria. According to the reckoning of Judah, 260 years elapsed between the death of Solomon and the fall of Samaria, B.C. 722; consequently the former event was about B.C. 983. For Assyrian dates see Table VI.

TABLE V.

PRIESTS AND PROPHETS.

Josephus has given a list of High Priests, most of whom, but not all, are from the Old Testament. Here, however, it will be sufficient to give the kings, with the most important priests and prophets mentioned in connection with them.

<i>King.</i>		<i>Priests.</i>	<i>Prophets.</i>
Saul		Ahijah (1 Sam. xiv. 3) Ahimelech (1 Sam. xxii. 9)	Samuel
David		Zadok and Abiathar	Nathan ; Gad
Solomon		Zadok	
<i>Judah.</i>	<i>Israel.</i>		
Rehoboam	...	...	Shemaiah
	Jeroboam	...	Ahijah
	Baasha	...	Jehu the son of Hanani
	Ahab	...	Elijah ; Micaiah
	Jehoram to Joash	...	Elisha
Joash.	...	Jehoiada Zechariah	
	Jeroboam II.	...	Jonah of Cath- hepher ; Amos
	Successors of Jeroboam II.	...	Hosea
Ahaz	...	Urijah	Isaiah
Hezekiah	...	...	Isaiah ; Micah
Josiah	...	Hilkiah	Nahum ; Habakkuk ; Jeremiah ; Obadiah
Jehoiakim and successors	...	Seraiah	Zephaniah
Captivity	...	...	Ezekiel ; Deutero-Isaiah (Is. xl.—lxvi.)
Return		Joshua	Haggai ; Zechariah
Days of Ezra and Nehemiah		Eliashib	Malachi

TABLE VI.

LEADING DATES IN ASSYRIAN, BABYLONIAN AND PERSIAN HISTORY.

Assyrian Dates.

Ahab and his allies defeated	...	...	B.C. 854
Jehu pays tribute to Shalmaneser II.	...	...	B.C. 842
Fall of Samaria	...	...	B.C. 722
Accession of Sennacherib	...	...	B.C. 705
Invasion of Judah by Sennacherib	...	...	B.C. 701
Fall of Nineveh	...	(circa)	B.C. 606

Babylonian Dates.

Accession of Nebuchadrezzar	...	...	B.C. 604
Fall of Jerusalem	...	...	B.C. 586

Persian Dates.

Accession of Cyrus	...	...	B.C. 538
Cambyses	...	...	B.C. 527—522
Darius Hystaspis	...	...	B.C. 521—486
Temple at Jerusalem finished	...	...	B.C. 516
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	...	...	B.C. 486—465
Artaxerxes Longimanus	...	...	B.C. 465—424
Ezra comes to Jerusalem	...	...	B.C. 458
Nehemiah appointed	...	...	B.C. 444
Nehemiah's second visit	...	...	B.C. 432

INDEX.

- Aaron 28 f.
 Abiathar, High Priest 88
 Abijah 126
 Abimelech, king of Gerar 8
 Abimelech, son of Gideon 66
 Abner 95, 97, 98
 Abraham 7 f.
 Absalom 106-110
 Achan 55
 Adonijah 112
 Ahab 129 f.
 Ahasuerus 176
 Ahaz 155 f.
 Ahijah 118, 124
 Ai 55
 Amalekites 35, 85
 Amaziah 151
 Ammonites 80, 102, 153, 193
 Amorites, five kings of 56
 Amos 148
 Ark of the Covenant 42, 54, 73,
 76, 101
 Asa 127
 Assyria 149, 155 f. 198
 Athaliah 150
 Azariah (Uzziah) 152

 Baal 129 f.
 Baal-berith 66
 Baasha 124
 Babel or Babylon 6
 Babylonia 1
 Balaam 48
 Barak 64
 Benhadad 156 f.
 Benjamites 63

 Cain and Abel 2
 Caleb 45, 57
 Cambyses 200
 Canaan, son of Ham 5
 Captivity: of Israel. 157; of
 Judah, 175 f.
 Carchemish 169
 Chedorlaomer 9
 Creation, accounts of 1, 197
 Cyrus 178

 Daniel 176
 Danites 68

 Darius Hystaspis 180
 Dathan and Abiram 46
 David 83 f.
 Deborah, prophetess 64
 Deuteronomy, Book of 168

 Edom 195
 Egypt: Abraham in, 7; Joseph
 in, 22 f.; Israel in, 22-29
 Eleazar, son of Aaron 47
 Eli 73 f.
 Eliashib 184
 Elijah 129 f.
 Elisha 132, 140 f.
 Ephraimites 65
 Esarhaddon 180
 Esau 15 f.
 Esther 176
 Ezekiel 175
 Ezra 181 f.

 Feasts, laws of 38, 204
 Flood, accounts of 41., 198

 Gedaliah 175
 Geography 5, 187 f.
 Gibeonites 56, 98, 103
 Gideon 65
 Gilboa, Mt. 91
 Gilgal, Joshua's camp at 54
 Golden Calf 40

 Haggai 180
 Hazael 143, 151
 Hebron 8, 63, 97, 99
 Hezekiah 159 f.
 Hittites 12, 17, 105
 Hosea (prophet) 149
 Hoshea (king) 149

 Isaac 10, 15 f.
 Isaiah 156
 Ishbosheth 95, 98
 Ishmael 10, 11

 Jabesh-Gilead 80, 91
 Jacob 15 f.
 Jehoiachin 170
 Jehoiada (priest) 171
 Jehoiakim 170
 Jehonadab, son of Rechab 144

- Jehoram (= Joram), king of Israel 144
 Jehoram, king of Judah 144
 Jehoshaphat 128, 138
 Jehu 143 f.
 Jephthah 62
 Jeremiah 170-175
 Jericho 54 f., 199
 Jeroboam I. 118, 121-124
 Jeroboam II. 148
 Jerusalem 100, 174
 Jezebel 129 f., 144
 Jezreel 131, 132, 144
 Joab 97, 100, 110, 113
 Joash, king of Judah 150
 Joash, king of Israel 147
 Jonathan 82, 87
 Joseph 22 f.
 Joshua 41, 53 f.
 Josiah 168 f.
 Jotham (son of Gideon) 67
 Jotham (king) 153
 Judah, kingdom of 126 f., 150 f.; ch. xxi., xxii.

 Kadesh 45
 Kenites 42, 64
 Korah 46

 Lamech 3
 Laws of Book of Covenant 33
 Law, reading of 184
 Lot 8, 11

 Manasseh, king 167
 Manassites 65
 Micah of Mount Ephraim, 70
 Micah, prophet 159
 Michmash 82
 Midianites 23, 49, 65
 Miriam 32
 Moabite Stone 199
 Moses 27 f.

 Nabal 89
 Nebuchadrezzar 170 f.
 Nehemiah 182 f.

 Omri 125
 Othniel 63

 Passover 29, 54, 162
 Pekah 149
 Pharaoh (Joseph's) 24
 Pharaoh of the Oppression 27, 197
 Philistines 68, 76, 82, 91, 100, 194

 Qarqara (Karkar) 139

 Rameses II. 27, 197
 Rechabites 171
 Rehoboam 121, 126
 Return from Captivity 173 f.
 Reuben and Gad 49
 Rezon, king of Syria 119
 Ruth 70

 Sacrifice, laws of 205
 Samaria 125, 143, 157
 Samaritans 157, 180
 Samson 68 f.
 Samuel 74 f.
 Sanballat 183
 Sargon 160
 Saul 78 f.
 Sennacherib 161-166, 193
 Shiloh 58, 73
 Shishak 126, 197
 Sisera 64
 Solomon 112-119
 Syrians 136, 142, 145

 Tabernacle 40
 Tel-el-Amarna tablets 196
 Temple, Solomon's 116 f.
 Temple, Second 179 f.
 Ten Words, the (= Commandments) 37
 Tyre 161

 Uzziah 152

 Wilderness, Israel in 32-46

 Xerxes 176

 Zadok (priest) 112
 Zedekiah, king of Judah 173 f.
 Zerubbabel 179 f.
 Ziklag 90, 96
 Zion 99

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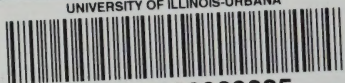
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